

Irish Population Health: *life expectancy and mortality*

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Key Point:

Over the last decade life-expectancy in Ireland has increased by 2 years for women and 3 years for men since 2008: women living to 84 years and men to 80 years in 2018. Notwithstanding the dramatic rise in life-expectancy across the EU over the last number of decades, there has been a slowdown in life-expectancy in many countries, particularly in Western Europe. In the Irish case, life-expectancy rose by 4.5 years for men and 4 years for women between 2000 and 2010. However, in more recent years the gains in life-expectancy have slowed down considerably. Mortality trends over the last decade show that cancer related diseases remain the leading cause of death, causing some 9,000 deaths in 2018. Notwithstanding, the death rate from cancer has decreased by 10% between 2009 and 2018. While diseases of the circulatory system denote the second largest cause of death in 2018, death rates in this area have decreased by 25% in the last decade (2009-2018). Diseases of the respiratory system account for the third main cause of death in Ireland – with more than 4,000 people dying from respiratory related diseases in 2018. The proportion of deaths caused by External injury and poisoning was over 1,300 in 2018. In this area, transport accidents and suicide death rates have fallen considerably – decreasing by 50% and 38% respectively between the years 2009 and 2018.

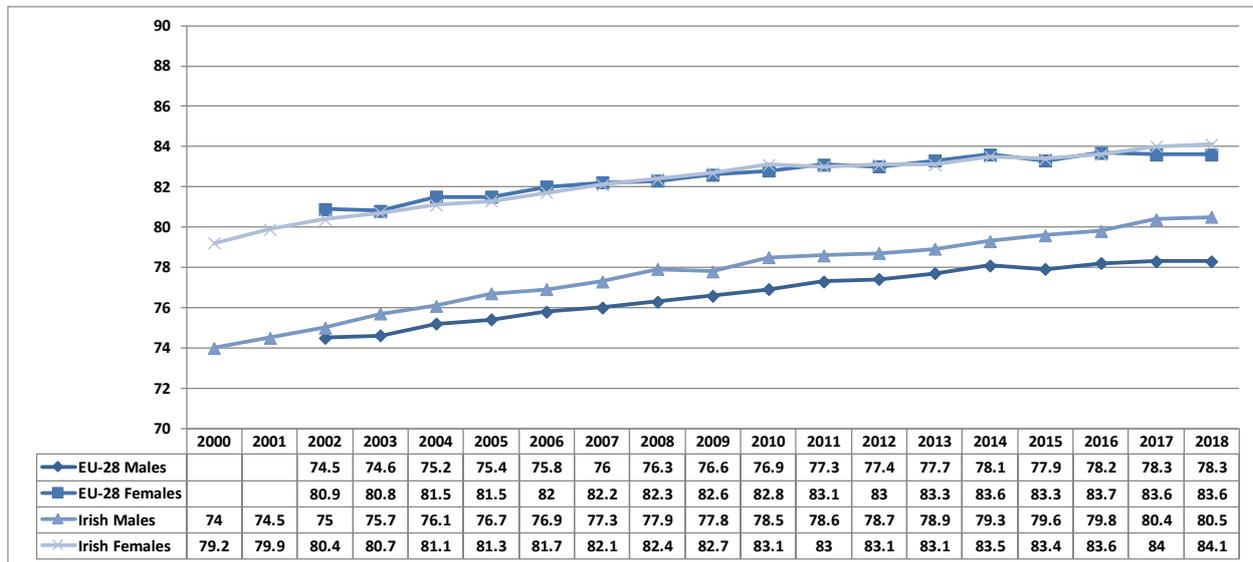
Life Expectancy Trends Overtime

Figure 1 shows life expectancy at birth between the years 2000 and 2018. Life expectancy in Ireland is now above the EU-28 average having increased by 2 years for women and 2.5 years for men since 2008: with women living to 84.1 years and men to 80.5 years in 2018. The EU-28 average life expectancy was 83.6 for women and 78.3 years for men in 2018: increasing by 1.3 and 2 years for women and men respectively since 2008.

While there has been a dramatic rise in life expectancy across the EU over the last number of decades, life-expectancy has slowed down since 2010 in many countries, particularly in Western Europe (OECD, 2018). In the Irish case, life expectancy rose substantially between the years 2000 and 2010 by 4.5 years for men and 4 years for women: increasing from 74 years for men and 79 years for women in 2000. However, in more recent years the gains in life-expectancy have slowed down: with an increase of 2 years for men and 1 year for women between 2010 and 2018. An important factor that has contributed to the

recent slowdown in life expectancy in many EU countries is the slowdown in the reduction in death rates from circulatory diseases, which was previously the main driver of life expectancy gains (OECD, 2018).

Figure 1: Life-expectancy at birth for Ireland and EU-28, 2000-2018

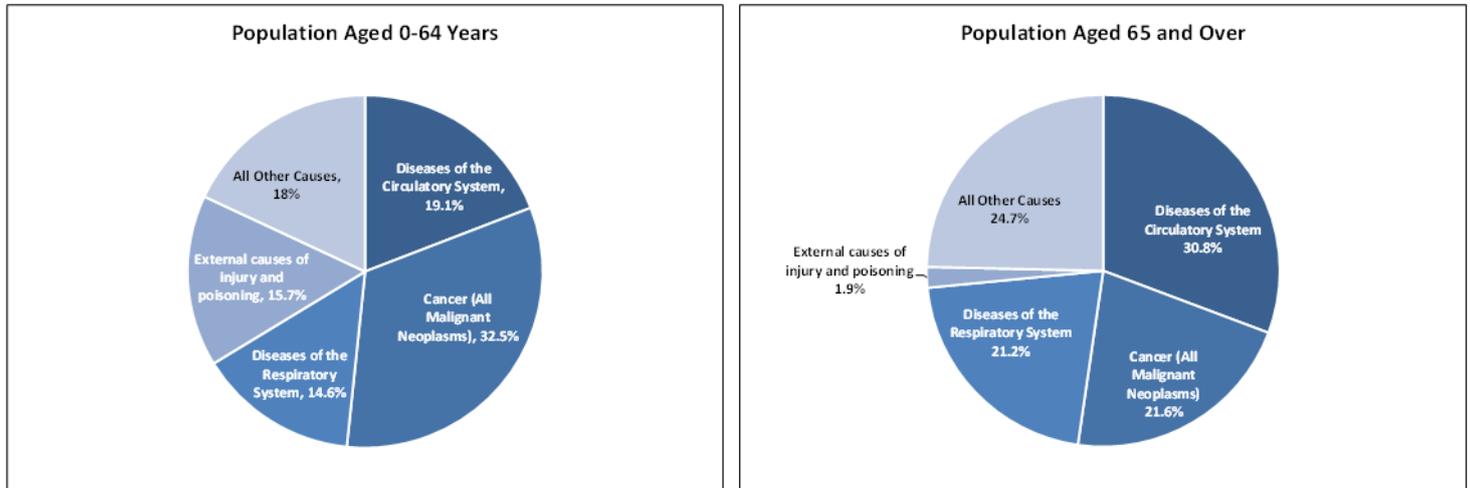


Source: Eurostat (2020) Note: life expectancy statistics for EU-28 Males and Females in 2000 and 2001 were not available

Figure 2 shows the principle causes of death for the Irish population aged 0-64 years and 65 years and over in 2017. Amongst the 0-64 year age group, cancer related diseases accounted for 32.5% of the deaths in 2018. This was followed by diseases of the circulatory system (19%) and external cause of injury and poisoning (16%). Diseases of the respiratory system accounted for 15% of deaths in 2018.

Amongst adults aged 65 years and over, the principle cause of death was diseases of the circulatory system at 31% in 2018. This was followed by Cancer (22%) and Diseases of the Respiratory System (21%). External causes of injury and poisoning accounted for 2% of deaths in 2018.

Figure 2: Principle Cause of Death 2018



Source: DOH (2019: 25). Note: the figures for 2018 are provisional as the numbers of deaths registered in this year are incomplete. Due to rounding the figures presented may not sum up to 100%.

Table 1 shows the principle causes of death over the last decade. In 2018, over 31,000 deaths were registered, representing a decrease in the mortality rate of 10.5% on 2009.

Cancer is a leading cause of death in Ireland, causing some 9,000 deaths in 2018: with the total number of deaths increasing by almost 1,000 (+10%) on 2009. Cancer of the Trachea, Bronchus and Lung represent a common cause of cancer accounting for over 1,800 deaths in 2018, rising by over 80 deaths on 2009. Cancer of the Female Breast accounted for almost 800 deaths in 2018: with death rate for this cause of death decreasing by 3% on 2009.

Diseases of the circulatory system are the second main cause of mortality, with almost 8,940 deaths occurring in 2018: decreasing from 9,507 in 2009 (-6%). Since 2009, the deaths rates for circulatory diseases decreased by 25%. Circulatory diseases consist of a range of illnesses related to the circulatory system including ischaemic heart diseases (e.g. heart attacks) and cerebrovascular diseases (e.g. strokes). Death rates from Ischaemic heart disease decreased by almost 35%: with the total number of deaths decreasing from 5,016 in 2009 to 4,140 in 2019. Cerebrovascular (Stroke) diseases were the cause of some 1,680 deaths in 2018: representing a decrease of almost 36% in the death rate on 2009. The overall decline of mortality rates in these areas in part can be explained by the increased policy focus on prevention, risk assessment and improvements in the quality of services provided (DOH, 2019).

Respiratory diseases account for the third main cause of death in Ireland. More than 4,000 people died from respiratory diseases in 2018, representing a 10.5% decrease in the death rate on 2009. Some of the main causes of death include chronic lower respiratory diseases (CLRD) (e.g. asthma and bronchitis) and pneumonia. The number of CLRD increased from 1,516 deaths in 2009 to 1,743 in 2018 (+15%). However, when expressed as per 100,000

of the population, the mortality rate has decreased by 9.5%. Pneumonia related diseases accounted for almost 1,100 deaths in 2018: with the death rate decreasing substantially by almost 40% since 2009.

Table 1: Principle Causes of Death. 2009-2018

		2009	2013	2017	2018 (p)	% change 2009-2018
Diseases of the Circulatory System						
All Circulatory System Diseases:	Number	9,507	9,473	8,889	8,938	-6.0
	Rate	391.6	354.8	291.4	293.1	-25.1
<i>of which contains</i>						
<i>Ischemic Heart Disease</i>	Number	5,016	4,642	4,160	4,140	-17.5
	Rate	204	171.6	133.8	133.3	-34.7
<i>Stroke</i>	Number	2,054	1,959	1,706	1,680	-18.2
	Rate	86.5	75.0	56.6	55.6	-35.7
Cancer						
All Malignant Neoplasms:	Number	8,336	8,725	9,141	9,198	10.3
	Rate	302.7	288.8	270.4	272.6	-10.0
<i>of which contains</i>						
<i>Cancer of Trachea, Bronchus and Lung</i>	Number	1,728	1,831	1,911	1,812	4.9
	Rate	62.3	60.1	56.2	53.2	-14.7
<i>Cancer of the Female Breast</i>	Number	662	704	724	773	16.8
	Rate	41.6	40.6	37.8	40.4	-2.9
Diseases of the Respiratory System						
All Respiratory System Diseases:	Number	3,606	3,504	4,059	4,165	15.5
	Rate	154.4	135.6	135.7	138.1	-10.5
<i>of which contains</i>						
<i>Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease</i>	Number	1,516	1,657	1,611	1,743	15.0
	Rate	62.0	61.6	52.2	56.1	-9.5
<i>Pneumonia</i>	Number	1,320	983	1,088	1,084	-17.9
	Rate	59.8	40.5	38.4	37.8	-36.8
External causes of injury and poisoning						
All Deaths from External Causes:	Number	1,726	1,491	1,299	1,341	-22.3
	Rate	44.4	38.1	32.5	33.9	-23.6
<i>of which contains</i>						
<i>Transport Accidents</i>	Number	225	167	127	106	-52.9
	Rate	4.9	3.9	3.0	2.5	-49.7
<i>Suicide</i>	Number	552	487	383	352	-36.2
	Rate	12.2	11.1	8.3	7.6	-37.8
Infant Mortality						
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	Number	247	245	174	187	-24.3
	Rate	3.3	3.6	3.0	3.1	-5.2
All Causes of Death	Number	28,380	29,504	30,418	31,116	9.6
	Rate	1,092.4	1,043.9	955.5	977.9	-10.5

Source: DOH (2019) Note: the figures for 2018 are provisional as the numbers of deaths registered in this year are incomplete. Data up until 2017 is final. The rates provided in the table are age standardised to the European standard population and are presented as rates per 100,000 population except for infant mortality rates which are expressed as deaths per 1,000 live births. Diseases of the respiratory system exclude cancer of the Trachea, Bronchus and Lung.

External causes of injury and poisoning caused 1,341 deaths in 2018, decreasing from almost 1,730 deaths in 2009 (-22%). In this domain, transport accidents and suicide death

rates have fallen considerably – decreasing by almost 50% and 38% respectively between the years 2009 and 2018. Infant mortality rates have also decreased by 5% during these years.

References

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