

THE SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES IN IRELAND

Press Release

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Irish death rates remain higher than average for developed countries Mortality rate from heart disease in Ireland is now less than half the 1980 level

A study carried out by the Society of Actuaries in Ireland has found that at most ages, and especially at older ages, Irish death rates are higher than the average across 19 developed countries.¹ In particular, death rates for women aged 65 – 85 and men aged 75 – 85 are more than 20% higher in Ireland.

Although, the difference in life expectancy is relatively small – at around one and a half years - if Irish death rates matched the international average, approximately 1,100 fewer people aged under 75 would die in Ireland each year (in 2005, a total of 11,023 people died aged under 75).

Irish death rates are lower than the international average only for men aged between 35 and 55 and for women between 25 and 35 and between 42 and 48.

The study found, however, that significant improvements in Irish mortality rates have been achieved over the past 25 years. Overall, death rates have reduced by 40% between 1980 and 2004.

The most significant successes have been in reducing the numbers of deaths from heart and cerebrovascular disease, which together accounted for approximately 40% of all deaths in 2004. “Overall, the mortality rate from heart disease in 2004 was 47% of the

¹ The “international average” mortality table was constructed using data from the Human Mortality Database www.mortality.org for the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England & Wales, Finland, France, West Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

1980 level, so the death rate is less than half what it was 25 years ago”, according to Aisling Kennedy, Director of Professional Affairs, Society of Actuaries. “Effectively, this means that 52,000 deaths have been postponed over this period, an average of approximately 2,200 per annum.”

Deaths related to cerebrovascular diseases, such as stroke, showed an even greater improvement, with the 2004 death rate reduced to 35% of the 1980 figure, resulting in a further 53,000 deaths being prevented over the 24 year period.

On the other hand, there is a more mixed picture for cancer, which accounted for around one quarter of all deaths in 2004. While death rates from cancer have reduced overall, the death rates for men due to prostate cancer, and for women due to lung cancer, have actually increased.

213 more men died from prostate cancer in 2004 than would have been the case had death rates remained at 1980 levels. Similarly, 69 more women died from lung cancer than would have been the case had death rates remained at 1980 levels.

Ends

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***Society of Actuaries in Ireland** The Society of Actuaries in Ireland is the professional body for actuaries practising in Ireland, many of whom work in the pensions and life assurance industries. The Society aims to develop the role and understanding of the actuarial profession and to enhance its reputation, in particular for serving the public interest.*