



Press release

PB02-262
16 December 2002
9:30 AM

Suicide claims relatively many younger men

Nearly ten thousand people died before the age of fifty in the Netherlands in 2001, accounting for seven percent of the total number of deaths. One quarter of men who died under the age of fifty died an unnatural death, mainly from suicide (595) and road traffic accidents (479). The proportion of women in this age group who died from unnatural causes is about half of that of men. One third of the four thousand women who died before their fiftieth birthday died of cancer, according to figures from Statistics Netherlands.

Most deaths over 75 years of age

Just over 140 thousand people died in the Netherlands in 2001, most of whom were in the oldest age groups. More than half of men and more than two-thirds of women who died were over the age of 75. In spite of this, though, thousands of people die at relatively young ages every year. In 2001 nearly ten thousand people died before the age of fifty, an average 26 people a day.

Six thousand men died before the age of fifty

In 2001 nearly six thousand men died before their fiftieth birthday. Three quarters of them died from diseases, mainly cancer and heart disease. One quarter died from unnatural causes, mostly suicide and traffic accidents.

Fewer women die of unnatural causes

The number of women who die at relatively young ages is lower than the number of men, mainly because fewer of them die from unnatural causes. The suicide rate among younger women is less than half that for men, and fewer women die in road traffic accidents. Fewer women also die from diseases at younger ages, mortality from heart disease in particular is lower than among men of the same age. This is offset by a higher number of deaths from cancer, however, as breast cancer claims relatively many younger women. In 2001 more than four hundred women younger than fifty died of breast cancer. The number of younger women dying from lung cancer is about the same as that for men.

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Most deaths between ages 50 and 75 from cancer

Four out of ten men who died in 2001 were between ages 50 and 75. The main cause of death in this age group is cancer (particularly lung cancer), which killed nearly eleven thousand men in this age group last year. Heart and vascular diseases came second claiming nearly nine thousand men between 50 and 75. More than three thousand of these deaths were from acute heart attacks.

One quarter of women who died last year were aged between 50 and 75 years. Cancer claimed nearly half of these women, with breast and lung cancer as the most common forms.

The fact that fewer women than men die in this age group is caused by the lower prevalence of heart and vascular disease in women of these ages. Fewer women in this age group also die from lung cancer, although this gap is narrowing as women, in contrast to men, have started smoking more in recent decades.

Elderly people more likely to die from heart disease

Eight-six thousand of the 140 thousand people who died in 2001 were 75 years or older. Heart and vascular disease were by far the most common causes of death for this group, with cancer in second place. For men prostate cancer is a significant cause of death at higher ages, alongside lung cancer. For older women breast cancer is followed by cancer of the large intestine. Relatively many older people also die from lung diseases, especially chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and pneumonia.