

Glossary: Avoidable cause of death

Statistics Explained

An **avoidable cause of death**, also called **avoidable death** or **avoidable mortality**, is a **cause of death** which could be avoided and thus not result in **death**, through prevention or treatment.

Three categories of avoidable or amenable causes can be distinguished (*Simonato, 1998*).

- *causes avoidable through primary prevention (i.e. by reducing the incidence of the disease)*: including causes of death from diseases partly attributable to lifestyle factors and risk behaviours (e.g. alcohol and/or tobacco abuse resulting in lung and upper airways cancers, cirrhosis, alcoholic psychosis; unprotected sex leading to aids) and/or to occupational risk factors, but also includes injury and poisoning, influenced in part by legal and societal measures such as traffic safety and crime reduction policies as well as other types of risk behaviour (dangerous driving, suicide);
- *causes amenable to secondary prevention through early detection and treatment*: including causes of death for which screening procedures have been established (e.g. for breast or cervical cancer), as well as causes for which death is avoidable through early detection combined with adequate treatment, such as skin cancer;
- *causes amenable to improved treatment and medical care*: including infectious diseases, deaths from which are 'avoidable' largely through antibiotic treatment and immunisation, as well as causes requiring medical and/or surgical intervention such as hypertension, appendicitis, deaths of which are related to complex interactions within the health care system, such as accurate diagnosis, transport to hospital, adequate medical and surgical care.

Further information

- [Gender differences in premature mortality and avoidable deaths](#) (Authors: Lefèvre H., Jouglà E., Pavillon G., Le Toullec A.)

Related concepts

- [Antecedent cause](#)
- [Cause of death](#)
- [Cause of disease](#)
- [Competing cause of death](#)
- [Contributory cause of death](#)
- [Death](#)
- [External cause of death](#)

Statistical data

- [Causes of death statistics](#)