This article provides information relating to mortality in the European Union (EU).

Life expectancy at birth rose rapidly during the last century due to a number of factors, including reductions in infant mortality, rising living standards, improved lifestyles and better education, as well as advances in healthcare and medicine.

Slight increase in number of deaths in 2017

In 2017, some 5.3 million persons died in the EU-28. The annual number of deaths is the highest observed over the previous five decades (see Figure 1). The crude death rate, which is the number of deaths per 1 000 persons, was 10.3 in the EU-28 in 2017.

![Number of deaths, EU-28, 1962-2017](source: Eurostat (demo_gind))

**Figure 1: Number of deaths, EU-28, 1962-2017 (million)**

Source: Eurostat (demo_gind)

Life expectancy at birth increased in 2017 only for men

The most commonly used indicator for analysing mortality is life expectancy at birth: the mean number of years that a person can expect to live at birth if subjected to current mortality conditions throughout the rest of their life. It is a simple but powerful way of illustrating the developments in mortality.
Life expectancy at birth in the EU-28 was estimated at 80.9 years in 2017 (0.1 years lower than 2016), reaching 83.5 years for women (0.1 lower than 2016) and 78.3 years for men (0.1 higher than 2016) (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

For women, this was the second decline in EU-28 life expectancy since the year 2002.

Overall, between 2002 (the first year for which life expectancy data became available for all EU Member States) and 2017, life expectancy in the EU-28 increased by 3.2 years, from 77.7 to 80.9 years; the increase was by 2.6 years for women and 3.8 years for men.

Figure 2: Life expectancy at birth, EU-28, 2002-2017

It is not possible to say whether the reduction in life expectancy observed between 2016 and 2017 is only temporary or whether the reduction will continue in the following years.

Table 1 shows that in 2017 life expectancy decreased in 11 Member States, compared with 2016, from a maximum of 0.6 years in Luxembourg (from 82.7 to 82.1 years) to a minimum of 0.1 in Bulgaria (from 74.9 to 74.8 years), Greece (from 81.5 to 81.4 years), Spain (from 83.5 to 83.4 years) and Austria (from 81.8 to 81.7 years). In these countries the life expectancy for women decreased by 1 year in Luxembourg, 0.2 years in Spain, 0.1 years in Bulgaria, Greece and Austria, while a reduction for men was observed only in Luxembourg (0.2 years) and in Greece (0.1 years) since Bulgaria, Spain an Austria registered an increase of 0.1 years.

The second largest decrease of life expectancy was observed in Cyprus, where it was estimated at 82.2 years (0.5 lower than in 2016). In this country the life expectancy for women declined more (0.7 years) than life expectancy for men (0.3 years) (see Table 1).

Eleven Member States showed an increase in life expectancy at birth, from 0.9 in Lithuania to 0.1 in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, while 6 Member states were stable.

In the years between 2000 and 2017, the rise in life expectancy at birth for men in the EU Member States ranged from a minimum of 2.9 years (in Greece) to a maximum of 8.2 years (in Estonia). For women, the increase ranged from 2.1 years (in Sweden) to 6.2 years (in Estonia).
There are still major differences between countries (see Table 1). In 2017, the differences between the highest and lowest life expectancies among EU Member States amounted to 11 years for men and 7.7 years for women. For men, the lowest life expectancy was recorded in Latvia (69.8 years) and the highest in both Italy and Sweden (80.8 years). For women, the range was from a low of 78.4 years in Bulgaria to a high of 86.1 years in Spain. In 2017, the life expectancy for women is still higher than the life expectancy for men. With a gender gap of 5.2 years of life in 2017, newly born females in the EU-28 should generally expect to outlive men. Furthermore, this gap varied substantially between EU Member States. In 2017, the largest difference between the sexes was found in Latvia (9.9 years) and the smallest in the Netherlands (3.2 years) — see Figure 3.

Table 1: Life expectancy at birth, 1980-2017(years)Source: Eurostat (demo_mlexpec)

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Mortality and life expectancy statistics 3
Table 1 shows that in 2017 life expectancy increased in all the EFTA countries, compared with 2016, except for Switzerland, where it was stable. Among the candidate countries life expectancy increased in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey, was stable in Albania and decreased by 0.1 years in Serbia.

Regarding the EFTA countries, in the years between 2000 and 2017, the rise in life expectancy at birth for men ranged from a minimum of 3.3 years (in Iceland) to a maximum of 7.7 years (in Liechtenstein). For women, the increase ranged from 2.7 years to 6.1 years in the same countries.

Among the candidate countries, data for the years between 2000 and 2017 are available only for North Macedonia and Serbia. Life expectancy in North Macedonia rose by 3.3 years for men and by 2.7 years for women, and life expectancy in Serbia rose by 4.2 years for men and by 3.7 for women.

In 2017, EFTA and candidate countries recorded smaller differences between the highest and lowest life expectancies than in the EU-28. For EFTA countries these differences were 0.6 years for men (ranging from a low of 81.0 in Norway and a high of 81.6 both in Switzerland and in Liechtenstein) and 1.7 for women (from 84.3 in both Norway and Iceland to 86.0 in Liechtenstein). Within the candidate countries the difference between the highest and lowest life expectancies amounted to 4.0 years for men (from 73.1 in Serbia to 77.1 in Albania) and to 3.4 years for women (from 77.9 in North Macedonia to 81.3 in Turkey).

The EFTA countries recorded relatively low differences between life expectancy at birth for men and women, ranging from 4.4 years in Liechtenstein and 3.2 in Iceland. The same behaviour can be observed in the candidate countries, where the differences ranged between 5.6 years in Turkey and 3.0 in Albania.
Life expectancy at age 65 decreased in 2017

Looking at the older generations in the EU-28, Table 2 shows that also life expectancy at 65 showed a small decrease in 2017. It was estimated at 19.9 years (0.1 years lower than 2016), reaching 21.4 years for women (0.2 years lower than 2016) and 18.1 years for men (0.1 years lower than 2016).

Table 2: Life expectancy at age 65, 1980-2017(years)
Source: Eurostat (demo_mlexpec)

Table 2 reveals a pattern similar to the one showed in Table 1. Compared with 2016, life expectancy at age 65 decreased in 16 Member States from a maximum of 0.7 years in Luxembourg (from 20.9 to 20.2 years) to a minimum of 0.1 years in Bulgaria (from 16.2 to 16.1 years), Germany (from 19.8 to 19.7 years), Spain (from 21.6 to 21.5 years), France (from 21.8 to 21.7 years), Austria (from 20.2 to 20.1 years), and Slovakia (from 17.5 to 17.4 years). In these countries the life expectancy for women decreased by 1 year in Luxembourg, by 0.2 years in Austria and Spain and by 0.1 years in Bulgaria, Germany, France and Slovakia, while the reduction for men was 0.3 years in Luxembourg, 0.1 years in Bulgaria and Spain, with no reduction for Austria, Germany, France and Slovakia.

Table 2 shows that only six Member States showed an increase in life expectancy at age 65. This was from a maximum 0.3 years in both Ireland and Portugal to a minimum of 0.1 years in Denmark, the Netherlands and Lithuania; six Member States were stable.

In 2017, it can be observed that once a man had reached the age of 65, he could, on average, expect to live between another 14.1 years, as in Bulgaria and Latvia, and 19.6 years, as in France. The life expectancy of women at age 65 was higher; in 2017 it ranged from 17.8 years in Bulgaria to 23.6 years in France — see Table 2.
When looking at life expectancy at age 65 it can be observed that the gap between the sexes is smaller than the gap at birth. In 2017 women aged 65 in the EU-28 should generally expect to outlive men for 3.3 years. The largest difference between the sexes was found in Estonia (5.2 years) and the smallest in both Sweden and the United Kingdom (2.3 years) — see Figure 4.

In 2017, in the EFTA countries, the life expectancy of men at age 65 ranged from 19.3 years in Norway to 20.4 years in Lichtenstein, while the life expectancy for women varied from a minimum of 21.4 years in Iceland to a maximum of 22.9 years in Lichtenstein. — see Table 2.

In the candidate countries, the life expectancy of men at age 65 ranged from 14.5 years in Serbia to 17 years in Albania, while the life expectancy for women varied from a minimum of 16.6 years in North Macedonia to a maximum of 19.6 years in Turkey. — see Table 2.

Figure 4 shows that in 2017 women aged 65 in the EFTA countries expected to outlive men from a minimum of 1.6 years in Iceland to a maximum of 2.8 years in Switzerland. Within the candidate countries the biggest gap in life expectancy at age 65 between sexes was registered in Turkey (3.4 years) and the lowest was in Albania (1 year).

**Infant mortality**

Around 18 200 children died before reaching one year of age in the EU-28 in 2017; this was equivalent to an infant mortality rate of 3.6 deaths per 1 000 live births.
One of the most significant changes that has led to increases in life expectancy at birth has been the decrease in infant mortality rates. During the 10 years from 2007 to 2017, the infant mortality rate in the EU-28 fell from 4.4 deaths per 1,000 live births to 3.6 deaths per 1,000 live births; extending the analysis to the last 20 years, the infant mortality rate was almost halved (6.8 deaths per 1,000 in 1997). The most significant reductions in infant mortality were generally recorded within those EU Member States which tended to record higher levels of infant mortality in 2007, compared with the EU average.

In 2017, the highest infant mortality rates in the EU-28 were registered in both Malta and Romania (6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births) and Bulgaria (6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births), and the lowest were recorded in Cyprus (1.3 deaths per 1,000 live births) and Finland (2.0 deaths per 1,000 live births).

In 2017, in the EFTA countries the infant mortality rates ranged from a minimum of 0 deaths per 1,000 live births in Lichtenstein (this very low value is influenced by the small population number of the country) to a maximum of 3.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in Switzerland.

In 2017, all the candidate countries, except Montenegro, registered infant mortality rates higher than the EU-28 average, ranging from a minimum of 4.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in Serbia to a maximum of 9.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in both North Macedonia and Turkey.

**Source data for tables and graphs**

- Mortality and life expectancy statistics: tables and figures

**Data sources**

Eurostat provides information on a wide range of demographic data, including statistics on the number of deaths by sex, by age, by year of birth, as well as according to citizenship, country of birth and educational attainment; statistics are also collected for infant mortality and late foetal deaths. A series of mortality indicators are produced, which may be used to derive a range of information on subjects such as crude death rates or life expectancy measures by age, sex or educational attainment.
Context
The gradual increase in life expectancy in the EU is one of the contributing factors to the ageing of the EU-28’s population — alongside relatively low levels of fertility that have persisted for decades (see the articles on population structure and ageing and fertility statistics).

Other articles
- Causes of death statistics
- Fertility statistics
- Healthy life years statistics
- Population and population change statistics
- Population structure and ageing

Tables
- Mortality (t_demo_mor), see:
  - Life expectancy at birth, by sex (tps00025)
  - Life expectancy at age 65, by sex (tps00026)
  - Deaths by NUTS 2 region (tgs00098)
  - Life expectancy at birth by sex and NUTS 2 region (tgs00101)
  - Infant mortality rate (tps00027)

Database
- Mortality (demo_mor)

Dedicated section
- Deaths and life expectancy data

Publications
- Short analytical webnote - Demography Report - 2015 edition
- Highly educated men and women likely to live longer — Statistics in focus 24/2010
- The greying of the baby boomers — Statistics in focus 23/2011

Methodology
- Mortality (ESMS metadata file - demo_mor_esms)

External links
- The European Perinatal Health Report 2010

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Mortality_and_life_expectancy_statistics