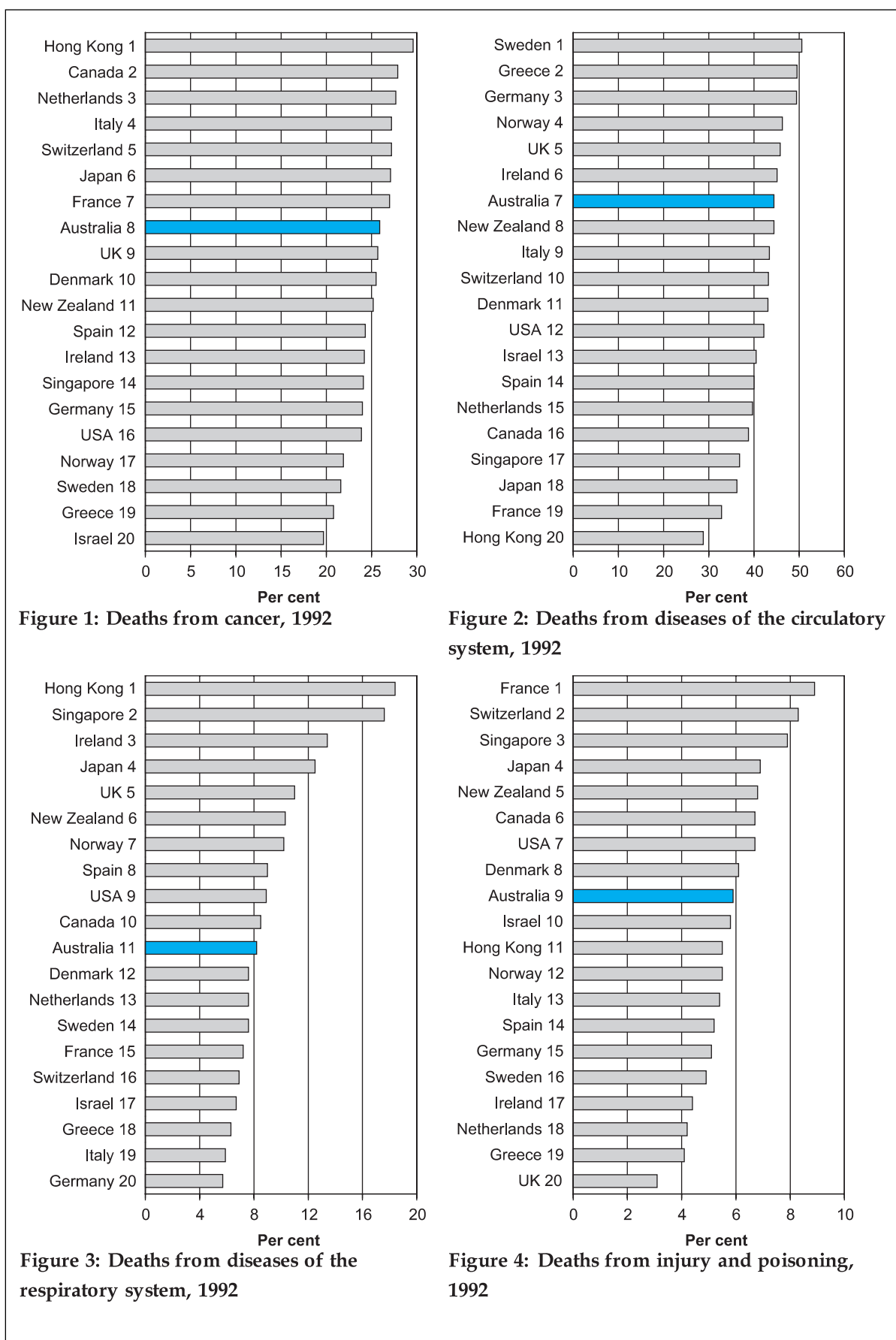


Major causes of death



Major causes of death

Per cent proportion of major causes of death, 1992

Country	Cancer (ICD 140–208)	Circulatory (ICD 390–459)	Respiratory (ICD 460–519)	Injury & poisoning (ICD E800–E999)	All other causes	All causes
Australia	25.9	44.4	8.2	5.9	15.6	100.0
Canada	27.9	38.8	8.5	6.7	18.1	100.0
Denmark	25.5	43.1	7.6	6.1	17.7	100.0
France	27.0	32.8	7.2	8.9	24.1	100.0
Germany	24.0	49.4	5.7	5.1	15.8	100.0
Greece	20.8	49.5	6.3	4.1	19.3	100.0
Hong Kong	29.6	28.8	18.4	5.5	17.7	100.0
Ireland	24.2	45.1	13.4	4.4	12.9	100.0
Israel	19.7	40.5	6.7	5.8	27.3	100.0
Italy	27.2	43.4	5.9	5.4	18.1	100.0
Japan	27.1	36.2	12.5	6.9	17.3	100.0
Netherlands	27.7	39.7	7.6	4.2	20.8	100.0
New Zealand	25.2	44.4	10.3	6.8	13.3	100.0
Norway	21.9	46.3	10.2	5.5	16.1	100.0
Singapore	24.1	36.8	17.6	7.9	13.6	100.0
Spain	24.3	40.0	9.0	5.2	21.5	100.0
Sweden	21.6	50.6	7.6	4.9	15.3	100.0
Switzerland	27.2	43.2	6.9	8.3	14.4	100.0
UK	25.7	45.8	11.0	3.1	14.4	100.0
USA	23.9	42.2	8.9	6.7	18.3	100.0

Sources: WHO 1994, 1995a, 1996d.

- Diseases of the circulatory system, such as heart attack and stroke; neoplasms (or cancer) such as lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancer; diseases of the respiratory system, such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis; and injury and poisoning, such as motor vehicle accidents, accidental falls and suicide, are the major causes of death among developed countries.
- In Australia, in 1992, 44.4% of all deaths were attributed to diseases of the circulatory system. A further one-quarter (25.9%) of all deaths were due to cancers, with the other major causes of death including diseases of the respiratory system (8.2%) and injury and poisoning (5.9%).
- Most developed countries have similar cause-of-death profiles to that for Australia. Between 30–50% of deaths in 1992 were due to diseases of the circulatory system, 20–30% from cancer, 5–15% from diseases of the respiratory system and 3–8% from injury and poisoning. Hong Kong was exceptional among comparison countries in that cancer deaths exceeded circulatory deaths in 1992. The very high proportion of deaths from respiratory diseases in Hong Kong and Singapore are also noteworthy.
- The highest proportion of deaths due to cancer occurred in Hong Kong, Canada and the Netherlands, with Israel, Greece, Sweden and Norway recording the lowest figures (Figure 1).
- Sweden, Greece and Germany recorded the highest proportion of deaths due to diseases of the circulatory system, at approximately 50% (Figure 2). On the other hand, in France, and the Asian countries (Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong) these diseases accounted for less than 40% of deaths.
- Hong Kong and Singapore had the highest proportion of deaths due to diseases of the respiratory system in 1992 – three times higher than Germany and Italy – and largely due to high rates of pneumonia in those countries (Figure 3). In France and Switzerland, more than 8% of all deaths were caused by injury and poisoning, attributable to causes such as accidental falls, traffic accidents and suicide (Figure 4). Only 3% of all deaths in the United Kingdom in 1992 were attributed to injury and poisoning.
- To gain a better understanding of mortality in various countries, it is important to consider more detailed cause- and age-sex-specific comparisons. These are provided on the following pages.

For more information, see:

WHO 1996. World health statistics annual, 1995. Geneva: World Health Organization.