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**Heart disease deaths have fallen by 70 per cent in a generation**

By **New Scientist staff and Press Association**

The number of people in the UK dying from [heart disease](https://www.newscientist.com/article/2085396-childcare-and-housework-are-what-give-women-more-heart-problems/) and [stroke](https://www.newscientist.com/article/2091841-stem-cell-brain-injections-let-people-walk-again-after-stroke/) has fallen dramatically, from 341,000 in 1979 to 155,000 in 2014.

An analysis of hospital statistics and population data has revealed that, over this time, coronary heart disease death rates have decreased by 72 per cent in England, 70 per cent in Wales, 71 per cent in Scotland, and 76 per cent in Northern Ireland.

The British Heart Foundation, which funded the research, says these large declines are due to better diagnosis and treatment.

The figures suggest that as many as 7 million people in the UK are currently living with cardiovascular disease. In England, 3.3 per cent of people have coronary heart disease, but the proportion is higher in Scotland, where 4.3 per cent have the condition.

**Hospital burden**

But despite the declines in deaths from [cardiovascular disease](https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn25550-bullying-raises-risk-of-cardiovascular-disease/), the number of hospital visits associated with these conditions is rising. Between 2013 and 2014, cardiovascular conditions accounted for nearly 1.69 million hospital visits – 50,000 more than in 2010 to 2011.

“Despite large reductions in mortality from cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, and stroke, these conditions have remained a substantial burden to the UK,” says [Nick Townsend](https://www.ndph.ox.ac.uk/bhfcpnp/team/nicholas-townsend-1) at the University of Oxford, who was part of the team that did the analysis.

The rise is likely to be due to the same reasons as the decline in deaths – cardiovascular disease is more likely to be identified and treated, meaning a higher proportion of those who have these conditions get medical care.

**Journal reference:***Heart***,**[DOI: 10.1136/heartjnl-2016-309573](http://heart.bmj.com/content/early/2016/07/26/heartjnl-2016-309573.full)

Read more: [Stem cell brain injections let people walk again after stroke](https://www.newscientist.com/article/2091841-stem-cell-brain-injections-let-people-walk-again-after-stroke/)