

Epidemiological profile of ischemic heart disease in Albania, 2024

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Abstract

Background: Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of mortality worldwide, with ischemic heart disease as the main contributor. In Albania, circulatory system diseases account for more than half of total mortality; however, updated national epidemiological data on IHD remain limited. Reliable incidence estimates are essential for monitoring trends, identifying high-risk populations, and informing public health interventions.

Aims: This study aimed to describe the epidemiological profile of ischemic heart disease in Albania during 2024 and to assess incidence patterns according to sex, age group, and geographic region, as well as short-term changes compared with 2023.

Study design: This study is a national descriptive cross-sectional epidemiological analysis based on routinely collected hospital surveillance data.

Methods: Data on newly diagnosed ischemic heart disease cases were collected from all hospital services in Albania. Only first-ever cases were included. Incidence rates per 100,000 population were calculated using population data from the 2023 national census (INSTAT). Analyses were stratified by sex, age group, and region, with comparisons between 2023 and 2024 to assess patterns by person, place, and time.

Results: In 2024, the national incidence of ischemic heart disease was 201.3 per 100,000 population, showing a slight decrease compared with 203.2 per 100,000 in 2023. Males accounted

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for 69% of all newly diagnosed cases and exhibited an incidence approximately 2.3 times higher than females (279.8 vs. 124.1 per 100,000). Incidence increased markedly with advancing age in both sexes, with the highest rates observed among individuals aged 65–79 years. Significant regional variation was identified, with the highest incidence recorded in Lezhë and Berat regions, while Kukës, Gjirokastrë, and Fier demonstrated the lowest rates. Although national incidence remained relatively stable, localized increases were observed in several regions, particularly among males.

Conclusion: Ischemic heart disease remains a major public health challenge in Albania, with marked disparities by sex, age, and region. Although national incidence has stabilized, the high burden among men and older adults underscores the need for strengthened prevention, improved surveillance, and targeted interventions to support evidence-based cardiovascular health policy.

Keywords: ischemic heart disease; epidemiology; incidence; Albania; cardiovascular diseases.