

# Cardiovascular diseases in women, a statement from the Policy Conference of the European Society of Cardiology

**Abstract** | [Full text](#) | [ESC Policy Conference Slide Resource](#)

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Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the leading cause of mortality both in men and women. In Europe, about 55% of all females' deaths are caused by CVD, especially coronary heart disease and stroke. Unfortunately, however, the risk of heart disease in women is underestimated because of the perception that women are 'protected' against ischaemic heart disease. What is not fully understood is that women during the fertile age have a lower risk of cardiac events, but this protection fades after menopause thus leaving women with untreated risk factors vulnerable to develop myocardial infarction, heart failure, and sudden cardiac death. Furthermore, clinical manifestations of ischaemic heart disease in women may be different from those commonly observed in males and this factor may account for under-recognition of the disease. The European Society of Cardiology has recently initiated an extensive 'Women at heart' program to coordinate research and educational initiatives on CVD in women. A Policy Conference on CVD in Women was one of the first steps in the development of this program. The objective of the conference was to collect the opinion of experts in the field coming from the European Society of Cardiology member countries to: (1) summarize the state-of-the-art from an European perspective; (2) to identify the scientific gaps on CVD in women; and (3) to delineate the strategies for changing the misperception of CVD in women, improving risk stratification, diagnosis, and therapy from a gender perspective and increasing women representation in clinical trials. The Policy Conference has provided the opportunity to review and comment on the current status of knowledge on CVD in women and to prioritize the actions needed to advance this area of knowledge in cardiology. In the preparation of this document we intend to provide the medical community and the stakeholders of this field with an overview of the more critical aspects that have emerged during the discussion. We also propose some immediate actions that should be undertaken with the hope that synergic activities will be implemented at European level with the support of national health care authorities.