

# Risk factor: blood pressure

"There are six flavours and, of them all, salt is the chief."  
Hindu proverb

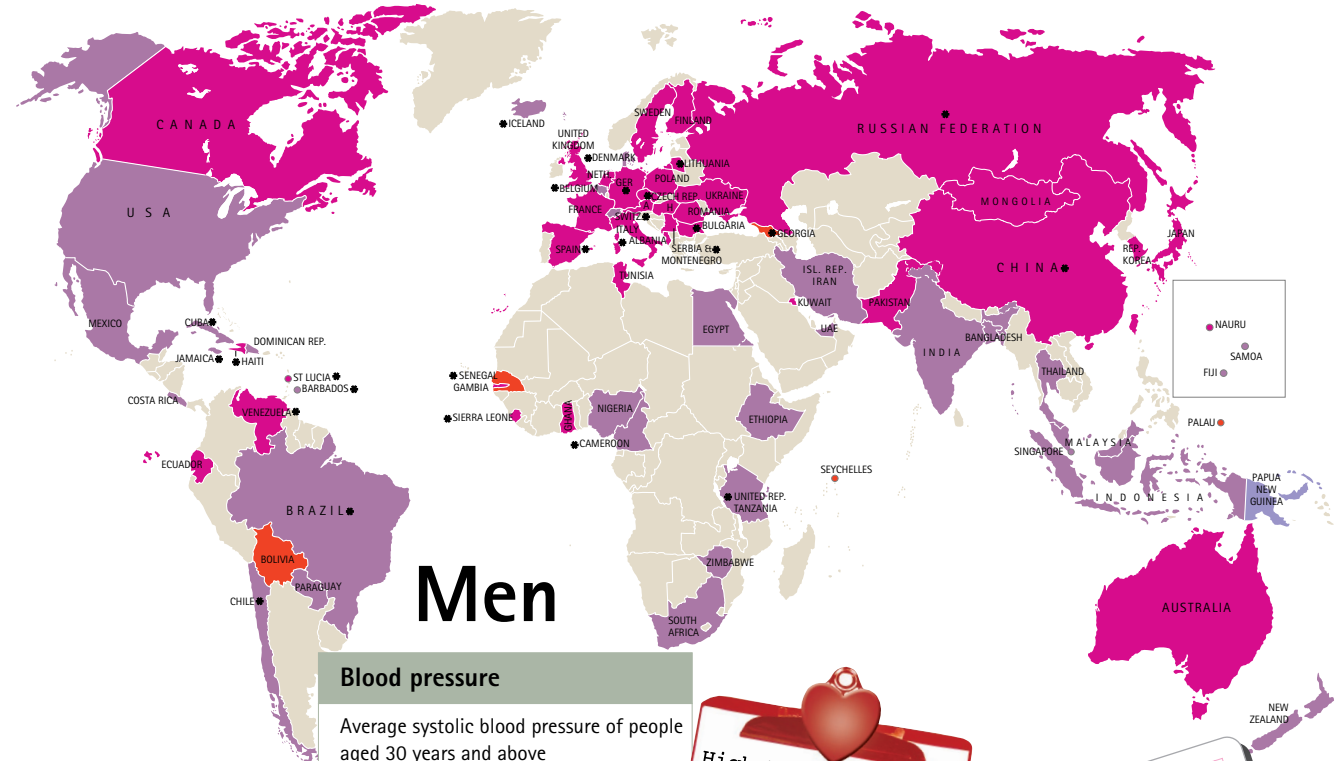
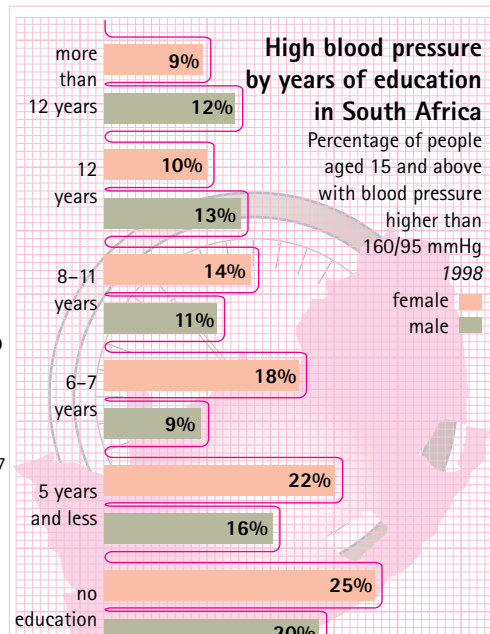
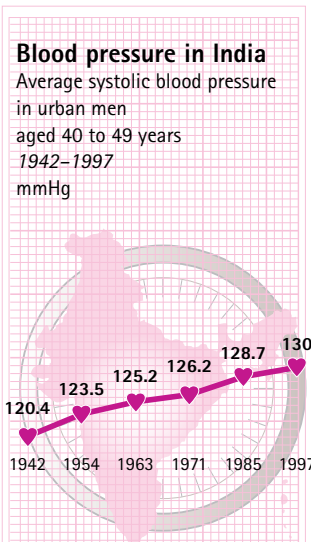
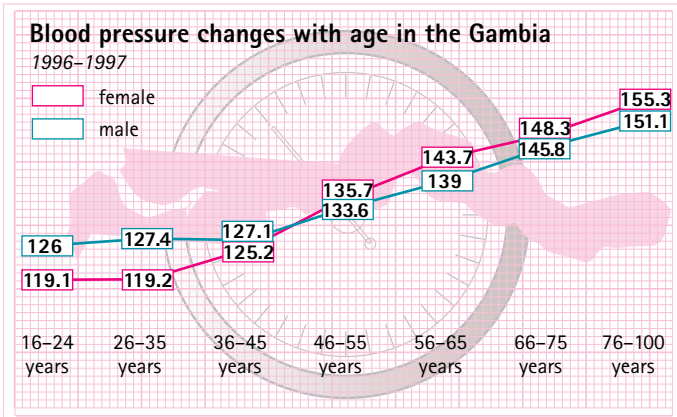
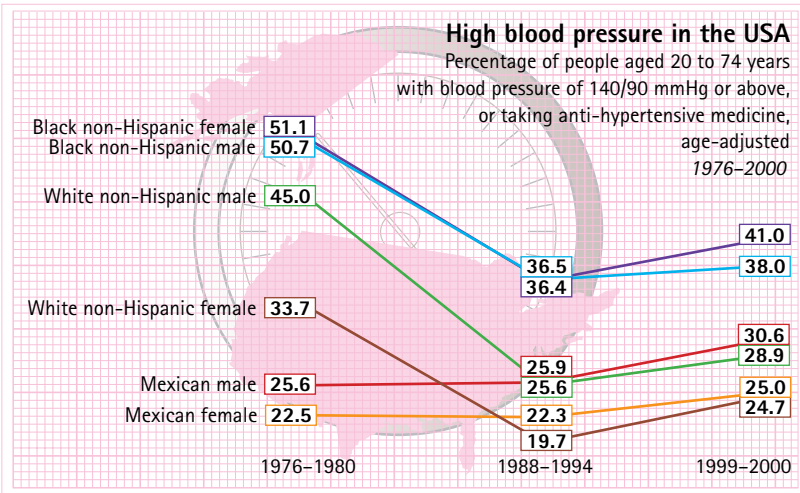
High blood pressure (hypertension) is one of the most important preventable causes of premature death worldwide. Even a blood pressure at the top end of the normal range increases risk. High blood pressure is defined as a systolic blood pressure (SBP) above 140 mmHg and/or a diastolic blood pressure (DBP) above 90 mmHg.

In most countries, up to 30% of adults suffer from high blood pressure and a further 50% to 60% would be in better health if they reduced their blood pressure, by increasing physical activity, maintaining an ideal body weight and eating more fruits and vegetables.

In people aged up to 50 years, both DBP and SBP are associated with cardiovascular risk; above this age, SBP is a far more important predictor. Blood pressure usually rises with age, except where salt intake is low, physical activity high, and obesity largely absent.

Most natural foods contain salt, but processed food may be high in salt; in addition, individuals may add salt for taste. Dietary salt increases blood pressure in most people with hypertension, and in about a quarter of those with normal blood pressure, especially with increasing age. A high intake of salt independently increases the risk of CVD in overweight persons.

In addition to lifestyle changes, effective medication is available for control of high blood pressure.



## Men

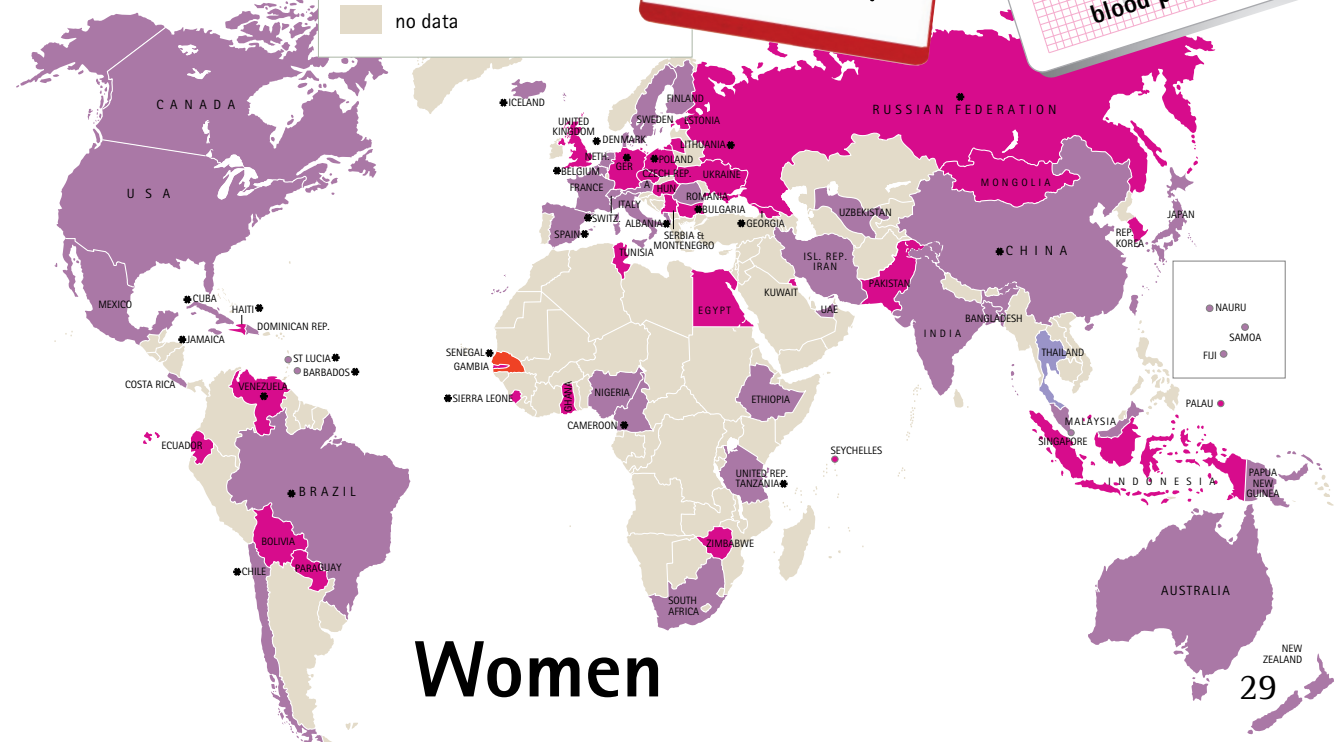
### Blood pressure

Average systolic blood pressure of people aged 30 years and above estimated to 2005 mmHg

- data from urban populations only
- 140 and above
- 130-139
- 120-129
- below 120
- no data

High blood pressure contributes to around half of all cardiovascular disease. The lower your blood pressure the better, as long as you do not feel faint or light-headed.

The risk of cardiovascular disease doubles for every 10 point increase in diastolic blood pressure or every 20 point increase in systolic blood pressure.



## Women