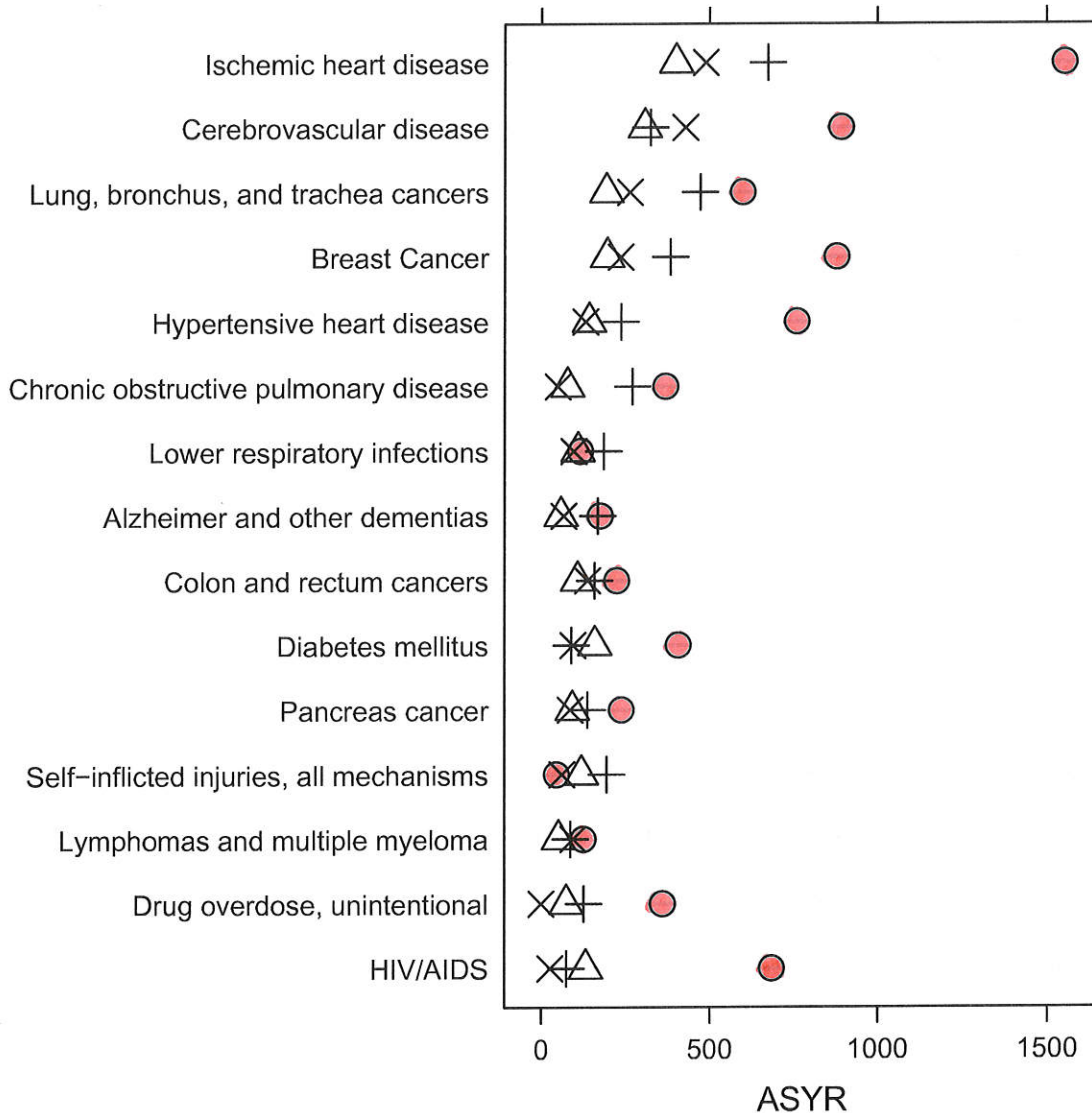


**Figure 2**  
**Leading causes of premature death among men (ranked by YLLs), comparing age-standardized YLL rates (ASYR) by cause of death and ethnicity, San Francisco, 2003–2004.** Symbols: African American (O), Latino/Hispanic (Δ), Asian/Pacific Islander (x), White (+).

mortality burden not requiring population estimates. It was used to rank the 15 leading causes of death for men and women (Table 7). However, these 15 leading causes were influenced by the larger number of deaths among older residents. To highlight premature, preventable causes of death, we then ranked these top 15 causes by

their average YLLs. Notably, many of the leading causes of death have strong social determinants. Alternatively, the ASYR could have been used to rank the leading causes of death; however, this was not our first choice because it requires population estimates, and the rankings would still be influenced by older deaths. Given our availability



**Figure 3**  
**Leading causes of premature death among women (ranked by YLLs), comparing age-standardized YLL rates (ASYR) by cause of death and ethnicity, San Francisco, 2003–2004.** Symbols: African American (O), Latino/Hispanic (Δ), Asian/Pacific Islander (x), White (+).

of population estimates, ASYRs were used to make comparisons among ethnic groups (Table 6 and Additional file 1). However, only the YLLs (including average YLLs) were necessary to rank the leading causes of premature death. Similar analyses were conducted for each ethnic group [Additional file 1].

This study has several strengths. First, we used a simple measure of premature mortality – expected years of life lost – that can be calculated from death registry data that is readily available, population-based, and complete for the whole population. Second, YLL estimates can be calculated for a comprehensive list of causes of death. Third,