Clustering of negative affectivity and social inhibition in the community: prevalence of type D personality as a cardiovascular risk marker.

OBJECTIVE: To explore the prevalence of Type D personality—the combination of negative affectivity and social inhibition—in the general population and its relationship to other cardiovascular risk factors, including psychopathological symptoms. Type D personality has been identified as a prognostic risk factor for various cardiovascular disease conditions.

METHODS: In a representative sample of 2698 individuals (aged 35-74 years), psychological, lifestyle, and somatic risk factors were investigated with laboratory testing, self-report measures, and a clinical interview. Type D was assessed with the German Type D Scale-14.

RESULTS: The prevalence of Type D was 23.4% (95% confidence interval [CI], 21.2-25.6) in men and 26.9% (95% CI, 23.7-30.1) in women and, thus, in the range of classical risk factors (e.g., hypercholesterolemia). In age-adjusted analysis, Type D was associated with psychopathological symptoms, including depression and somatic symptom burden. With the exception of physical inactivity in both sexes, hypertension in women and hypercholesterolemia in men, Type D was not associated with classical cardiovascular risk factors. Multivariate analysis revealed depression, exhaustion, anxiety, and low self-rated health as associated with Type D in both sexes (odds ratios, 1.97-3.21 in men, 1.52-2.44 in women).

CONCLUSIONS: A Type D
personality disposition can be found in about a quarter of the general population, which is comparable to the prevalence of classical cardiovascular risk factors. In both sexes, an independent association to Type D appeared mainly in psychopathological symptoms. Type D constitutes a relevant and independent risk marker in the community and should receive attention in clinical practice.