

Cancer in the UK: December 2011

Cancer Research UK is the leading source of high quality, interpreted UK cancer information for health professionals, patients, journalists, and the public. Data on 27 cancer sites are presented on the CancerStats website in downloadable documents, tables, charts and slide presentations; some of which are summarised below.

How many people are diagnosed with cancer each year?

There are around 309,500 new cases of cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer) diagnosed each year in the UK, and more than 1 in 3 people will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime.

Between 1979 and 2008, incidence rates for cancer in Great Britain increased by 26% with a 13% increase in men and a 34% increase in women. However, in the last decade incidence rates have remained fairly constant.

There are more than 200 different types of cancer, but four of them - breast, lung, large bowel (colorectal) and prostate - account for over half (54%) of all new cases. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK even though it is rare in men. The 20 most commonly diagnosed cancers in the UK are shown in the figures below.

UK incidence 2008: the 20 most commonly diagnosed cancers in persons

Breast	48,034	(16%)
Lung	40,806	(13%)
Colorectal	39,991	(13%)
Prostate	37,051	(12%)
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	11,861	(4%)
Malignant Melanoma	11,767	(4%)
Bladder	10,335	(3%)
Kidney	8,757	(3%)
Oesophagus	8,173	(3%)
Pancreas	8,085	(3%)
Uterus	7,703	(2%)
Leukaemia	7,659	(2%)
Stomach	7,610	(2%)
Ovary	6,537	(2%)
Oral	5,790	(2%)
Brain with CNS	4,785	(2%)
Multiple myeloma	4,516	(1%)
Liver	3,594	(1%)
Cervix	2,938	(1%)
Mesothelioma	2,400	(1%)
CUP*	31,135	(10%)
Other		

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 10,951 (4%) of all cases

Persons: all malignant neoplasms excluding non-melanoma skin cancer 309,527 (100%)

UK incidence 2008: Males

Prostate	37,051	(24%)
Lung	22,846	(15%)
Colorectal	22,097	(14%)
Bladder	7,390	(5%)
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	6,343	(4%)
Malignant Melanoma	5,584	(4%)
Oesophagus	5,461	(4%)
Kidney	5,377	(3%)
Stomach	4,923	(3%)
Leukaemia	4,463	(3%)
CUP*	33,791	(22%)
Other		

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 5,028 (3%) of male cases

Males: all malignant neoplasms excluding non-melanoma skin cancer 155,326 (100%)

UK incidence 2008: Females

Breast	47,693	(31%)
Lung	17,960	(12%)
Colorectal	17,894	(12%)
Uterus	7,703	(5%)
Ovary	6,537	(4%)
Malignant Melanoma	6,183	(4%)
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	5,518	(4%)
Pancreas	4,084	(3%)
Kidney	3,380	(2%)
Leukaemia	3,196	(2%)
CUP*	34,063	(22%)
Other		

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 5,923 (4%) of female cases

Cancer incidence by age

Cancer occurs predominantly in older people, with three quarters (75%) of cases diagnosed in people aged 60 and over, and more than a third of cases in people aged 75 and over.

Less than 1% of all cases occur in children (0-14 years). 1427 cases of cancer were diagnosed in children in 2008, with a slightly higher incidence in boys than girls. Almost a third (31%) of all childhood cancers are leukaemias.

1,956 UK teenagers and young adults (15-24 years) were diagnosed with cancer in 2008. The most common cancers diagnosed in this age group include Hodgkin lymphoma, testicular cancer, malignant melanoma, bone and connective tissue, and leukaemia.

Around 1 in 10 of all cancer cases occur in adults aged 25-49 years. The most common cancers diagnosed in this age group include breast, malignant melanoma, bowel cancer and cancer of the cervix. Breast cancer accounts for nearly half (45%) of all cancers diagnosed in UK women aged 25-49 years.

Cancer incidence by sex

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men accounting for nearly a quarter (24%) of cancer cases in men. Lung cancer is the second most common followed by bowel cancer.

Breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in women accounting for almost a third (31%) of cases. Lung cancer is the second most common cancer closely followed by bowel cancer.

Cancers of unknown primaries

Cancers of unknown primaries accounted for 10,951 cases (4%) in 2008. Around three quarters of these occurred in the over 65s.

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How many people die from cancer in the UK?

In 2009, there were more than 156,000 cancer deaths in the UK, and over one in four (28%) of all deaths in the UK were due to cancer. Deaths from cancers of the lung, bowel, breast and prostate together account for almost a half (47%) of all cancer deaths. More than 1 in 5 (22%) of all cancer deaths are from lung cancer, largely due to smoking. Colorectal cancer was the second most common cause of cancer death (10%) and despite being extremely rare in men, breast cancer was the third most common cause of cancer death (8%). Between 1980 and 2009, mortality rates from cancer fell by just over a fifth (21%). The 20 most common causes of cancer death are shown in the figures below.

UK mortality 2009: the 20 most common causes of death from cancer

Lung	34,989	(22%)
Colorectum	15,908	(10%)
Breast	11,728	(8%)
Prostate	10,382	(7%)
Pancreas	8,020	(5%)
Oesophagus	7,560	(5%)
Stomach	5,018	(3%)
Bladder	5,011	(3%)
Leukaemia	4,452	(3%)
Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	4,445	(3%)
Ovary	4,317	(3%)
Brain with CNS	3,794	(2%)
Kidney	3,782	(2%)
Liver	3,618	(2%)
Other Digestive Organs	2,939	(2%)
Multiple Myeloma	2,538	(2%)
Mesothelioma	2,282	(1%)
Malignant Melanoma	2,081	(1%)
Oral	1,941	(1%)
Uterus	1,732	(1%)
CUP*	19,563	(13%)

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 10,793 (7%) of female deaths

Persons: all malignant neoplasms 156,090 (100%)

UK mortality 2009: Males

Lung	19,724	(24%)
Prostate	10,382	(13%)
Colorectum	8,600	(10%)
Oesophagus	5,097	(6%)
Pancreas	3,981	(5%)
Bladder	3,352	(4%)
Stomach	3,167	(4%)
Leukaemia	2,557	(3%)
Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	2,423	(3%)
Kidney	2,296	(3%)
CUP*	20,555	(25%)

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 4,962 (6%) of male deaths

Males: all malignant neoplasms 82,034 (100%)

UK mortality 2009: Females

Lung	15,265	(21%)
Breast	11,651	(16%)
Colorectum	7,308	(10%)
Ovary	4,317	(6%)
Pancreas	4,139	(6%)
Oesophagus	2,463	(3%)
Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	2,022	(3%)
Leukaemia	1,895	(3%)
Stomach	1,851	(2%)
Uterus	1,732	(2%)
CUP*	21,413	(29%)

*Cancers of Unknown Primaries (CUP) account for 5,831 (8%) of female deaths

Females: all malignant neoplasms 74,056 (100%)

Further information

The website is updated whenever new data become available. Please visit: <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/index.htm> for the latest statistics and details of our CancerStats reports.

Alternatively, please email the Statistical Information Team on stats.team@cancer.org.uk.

Cancer mortality by age

Reflecting the incidence of cancer, the majority of deaths from cancer occur in the elderly. More than three quarters of cancer deaths (77%) occur in people aged 65 years and over. Although there is a higher number of cancer deaths in the over 65s, cancer causes a greater proportion of deaths in younger people. Cancer caused more than a third (37%) of all deaths in the under 65s in the UK compared with 26% of all deaths in the over 65s.

Cancer mortality by sex

Lung cancer is still by far the most common cause of death from cancer in men, accounting for just under a quarter (24%) of all male cancer deaths. However, male mortality rates for lung and bowel cancers have fallen to their lowest levels in almost forty years.

Lung cancer also causes the largest proportion of female cancer deaths (21%) but unlike males the number of deaths has been increasing over the last forty years. However, female mortality rates for breast and bowel cancers are the lowest they have been in almost forty years.

Gender inequalities in cancer incidence and mortality

Analysis carried out by Cancer Research UK in collaboration with the National Cancer Intelligence Network showed that there were significant differences in both cancer incidence and mortality between the sexes. In general, men were at significantly greater risk of both getting and dying from nearly all of the common cancers that occur in both sexes. The full report can be downloaded from <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/inequalities/index.htm>

Cancers of unknown primaries

Deaths from cancers of unknown primaries accounted for 6% (4,962) of cancer deaths in males and 8% (5,831) of cancer deaths in females in 2009 in the UK.

However, there is no standard definition of CUP, which means that the true mortality of this disease may be underestimated.