Cancer Incidence and Prevalence in Scotland (to December 2017)

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division (ISD) provides an annual update of cancer incidence statistics in Scotland from 1993 to 2017. More than 50 cancer types are included. Note that the numbers for all cancers by convention exclude non-melanoma skin cancers because of the difficulty in capturing and recording these tumours, which are largely non-fatal and may be treated solely within primary care.

Main Points

- Over the last decade the overall numbers of cancers diagnosed in Scotland increased from around 30,000 in 2008 to more than 32,200 in 2017. In contrast, the risk of developing cancer fell by 4% over the same time period (reported using age-standardised rates).

- Despite more females (over 16,300) than males (over 15,800) being diagnosed with cancer in 2017, the risk of cancer has always been higher in males than females. The contrasting patterns between the numbers and rates between the sexes is partly due to there being more females living longer than males, although the population of both sexes continues to increase.

- For most cancers, the risks of getting cancer increases with age: three quarters are diagnosed in those aged 60 and over. This will continue to rise as the population ages.

- People who live in the more deprived areas of Scotland are a third more likely to be diagnosed with cancer than those living in the least deprived areas. Much of this difference is due to historical smoking rates. Although, some common cancers are more frequent in less deprived areas (for example, prostate in men and breast in women).

- Patients who are diagnosed at an earlier stage have better outcomes from cancer. More than three-quarters of breast cancers (78%) were diagnosed at an early stage (1 or 2). In contrast, almost half of lung cancers (47%) were diagnosed at a late stage. About a quarter of colorectal cancers were diagnosed at a late stage (23% in 2017).

- For females, there were significant increases in cancers of the liver (increased by 62.8%), thyroid (increased by 44.6%) and uterus (increased by 24%) over the past decade. Rates of colorectal and ovarian cancers fell 15% and non-Hodgkin lymphoma fell 11%. Leukaemias and stomach cancers also fell for women by 25.2% and 28.6%, respectively.

- While there was no significant change in cervical cancer rates overall, there was a reduction among younger women in 2017 that, together with reductions in pre-cancerous conditions, indicate that HPV vaccination has been effective.

- For males, there were significant increases in cancers of the liver (increased by 45.7%), thyroid (increased by 59.9%), kidney (increased by 24.5%) and malignant melanomas (increased by 17.9%) over the past decade. Rates of colorectal cancer fell 20.9% and lung cancer fell 17.7%. Leukaemias and stomach cancers also fell for men by 27.6% and 35.9%, respectively.
Nearly 4 in 10 cancers can be attributed to potentially modifiable risk factors. Cigarette smoking, being overweight and some occupational risk factors are among the largest cancer risks to the Scottish population. The effects of sunburn, alcohol consumption and a diet that is high in meat and low in fruit and vegetables are also apparent in these cancer data.

Most common 20 cancers in Scotland in 2017 for females and males (ordered by total for all persons).

![Cancer Incidence Chart]

**Background**

The Scottish Cancer Registry has been collecting information on cancer since 1958. Data collected by the Registry are published by ISD and are used for a wide variety of purposes.

Cancer registrations are believed to be essentially complete for the year 2017, but it is important to note that the cancer registration database is dynamic.

Where figures are included for the percentage change, these changes are statistically significant.

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**Further Information**

ISD publish a wide range of cancer statistics. You can find all our cancer information on our website including data visualisation [https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/](https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/). Further information can be found in the Cancer Incidence in Scotland (2017) report. The next release of this publication will be in April 2020.

**ISD and Official Statistics**

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. [Further information about our statistics](#).