Cancer Mortality in Scotland (2018)

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release
This release by the Information Services Division (ISD) provides an annual update of cancer mortality statistics in Scotland to 2018.

A major part of NHSScotland’s efforts to lessen the burden of cancer on society is to reduce mortality from the disease. Cancer mortality describes deaths due to cancer. It is a product of both the occurrence (incidence) of cancer and survival from the disease. Each may vary for individual types of cancer.

Main Points

• Over the last ten years, the overall risk of dying from cancer (the age-adjusted cancer mortality rate) has fallen by 10%, a decrease of 12% for males and 7% for females. The number of annual cancer deaths has increased over the same period. This is largely because the number of older people, who are at greater risk of developing cancer, has increased.


• Lung cancer is the most common cause of death from cancer in Scotland (3,980 deaths in 2018). A quarter of all deaths from cancer in Scotland are attributed to lung cancer which is more than double that of colorectal cancer, the next most common cause of death from cancer.
• In women over the past ten years the risk of dying from cancer has increased most for cancers of the liver and womb (uterus) – by 67% and 39%, respectively. The risk of dying from cancer in women has decreased most for cancers of the breast (16%), ovary (16%) and oesophagus (11%).

• In men over the past ten years the risk of dying from cancer has increased most for cancers of the liver– by 55%. The risk of dying from cancer in men has decreased most for cancers of the stomach (33%), lung (25%) and bowel (11%).

• For all cancers combined, the most deprived areas have incidence rates that are 32% higher than the least deprived areas. Mortality rates for all cancers combined are 74% higher in the most deprived compared with the least deprived areas. The possible reasons for these patterns are complex and reflect modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors for developing cancer, uptake of screening, access to treatments and other health conditions.

• When taken together with our analysis of cancer incidence, these analyses suggest that risk factors for developing liver and uterine cancers are likely to be responsible for increasing risks of dying from these conditions. Earlier detection, for example through screening, and better treatment may have led to the reduction in deaths from breast cancer. Earlier detection through screening and reducing incidence of bowel cancer may have led to the fall in mortality from this disease.

Background

This publication uses death registration data supplied by National Records of Scotland. This release includes information broken down by age group, sex, NHS Board and regional cancer network. Summary tables and charts on cancer incidence and mortality by deprivation category are also updated for 28 types of cancer.

When using this publication, it is more informative to examine trends in mortality over a number of years, rather than focussing on a single year of mortality. In the case of rare cancers, striking changes from one year to the next are likely to reflect random fluctuation caused by small numbers of deaths and may be misleading.

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Further Information

ISD publish a wide range of cancer statistics. You can find all our cancer information on our website. Further information can be found in the Cancer Mortality in Scotland (2018) report. We also publish information on cancer incidence and survival on our website. The next release of this publication will be October 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.