Cancer Survival in Scotland 2013-2017

A National Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides new information on cancer survival in Scotland for people diagnosed between 2013 and 2017 (and followed until the end of 2018), as well as long-term trends in survival for patients diagnosed since 1993. Information is presented for 27 types of cancer, for Scotland as a whole and by age, sex and socio-economic deprivation.

Main points

During the five-year period 2013-17, 138,150 adults were diagnosed with cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) in Scotland. For these patients:

- Overall, two thirds of men (67%) and women (71%) survived for at least one year, while 2 in 5 men (43%) and 1 in 2 women (51%) survived for at least five years.

- However, an individual’s chance of survival depends largely on which cancer they have, with 1-year survival ranging from around 20% to almost 100%, for different types of cancer.

After taking account of changes in the population age structure over time:

- Survival from all cancers (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) improved, at both one and five years, by around 2% between 2008-12 and 2013-17, for both men and women.

After using methods to take account of background mortality rates as well as changes in population age structure, survival appears to be improving for many cancers, but there was clear evidence for improvement in the following cases:

- For lung cancer, the most recent estimates of 1-year age-standardised net survival were: 36.7% in men and 44.9% in women, with corresponding 5-year estimates of 12.5% in men and 18.6% in women. This represents an absolute increase of 2.3 and 5.1 percentage points among men and women respectively since 2008-12.

- Similarly, 1-year survival clearly improved for cancers of the kidney, pancreas (in women), liver (in men), ovary, and multiple myeloma (in men). Five-year survival also clearly improved for cancers of the kidney (in men) and ovary.

Reasons for improved cancer survival may include diagnosis at an earlier stage and use of more effective treatments. Anyone offered screening for cancer should be encouraged to take it up and anyone who is worried about symptoms should be encouraged to seek medical advice: the chances of surviving cancer in Scotland have never been better.

Increasing socio-economic deprivation is associated with poorer survival from cancer. For example, the absolute differences in 1-year age-standardised net survival between the most and least deprived 20% of the population were: for lung cancer, 7.8% in men and 5.8% in women; for breast cancer, 2.5% in women; for colorectal cancer, 8.1% in men and 8.3% in women; and for prostate cancer, 2.5%.

Background
This publication uses a new method of estimating cancer-specific survival – age-standardised net survival – which is considered to be the best way of understanding outcomes due to cancer itself rather than other factors (such as age and underlying background mortality). As the proportions of different cancers in the population change over time, and since different cancers affect different demographic groups of people, survival is ideally examined separately for each type of cancer.

Only persons aged 15-99 years old at diagnosis were included in these analyses. Note 1-year survival (shown above) cannot always be estimated due to small numbers (or sex differences).

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Further information
A Full Report, accompanying Technical Report and data from this publication are available from the publication page on our website. The next release will be in January 2022.

PHS and Official Statistics
Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS 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 Statistics. Further information about our statistics.