

World Cancer Day, 4 February 2019

Summary

World Cancer Day has been marked annually on 4 February since 2000. It was established by the [Paris Charter](#) adopted at the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium that year.¹ The day's focus is on reducing preventable deaths from cancer through education, raising awareness and by urging governments and individuals across the world to take action.² The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that 9.6 million people worldwide are estimated to have died of cancer in 2018 and at least one third of common cancers are preventable by reducing behavioural and dietary risks, such as obesity and alcohol and tobacco consumption.³

World Cancer Day is the initiative of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), a membership body consisting of over 1,000 organisations in more than 160 countries, representing the world's major cancer societies, ministries of health and patient groups.⁴ The UICC's UK members include Cancer Research UK, the Lymphoma Association and Macmillan Cancer Support.⁵ One of the objectives of World Cancer Day is to raise awareness of the UICC's [World Cancer Declaration](#), which calls on governments and health policymakers to implement cancer prevention policies, promote greater equity in access to cancer treatments, and integrate cancer prevention into the world health and development agenda.⁶

The theme for World Cancer Day 2019 is 'I Am and I Will'.⁷ The UICC summarised the day's theme as follows:

World Cancer Day is a campaign built to resonate, inspire change and mobilise action long after the day has passed [...] 'I Am and I Will' is an empowering call-to-action urging for personal commitment and represents the power of individual action taken now to impact the future.⁸

Global Cancer Statistics

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death globally, with 9.6 million people estimated to have died of cancer in 2018.⁹ Lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver cancer are the most common types of cancer in men, while breast, colorectal, lung, cervix and thyroid cancer are the most common among women.¹⁰ The WHO estimated that in 2018 the most common causes of cancer deaths were cancers affecting the:

- lung (1.76 million deaths)
- colorectal (862,000 deaths)
- stomach (783,000 deaths)
- liver (782,000 deaths)
- breast (627,000 deaths)¹¹

Approximately a third of cancer deaths are caused by the following individual behaviours and risk factors:

- high body mass index;
- low fruit and vegetable intake;
- lack of physical activity; and
- tobacco and alcohol use.¹²

Tobacco use is the single most important risk factor, causing 22% of cancer deaths globally.¹³ The WHO stated that 70% of cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, and the organisation estimated that in 2010 the economic cost of global cancer deaths totalled US\$1.16 trillion.¹⁴

Cancer in England

Cancer Registrations

The latest figures on cancer registrations in England, released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in June 2018, were for the year 2016.¹⁵ The data showed that there were 303,135 new cancer diagnoses (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) registered in 2016, with more cancers being registered in men (155,019) than women (148,116).¹⁶ Just over half (52.7%) of all registrations were either breast, prostate, lung or colorectal cancer.¹⁷ Breast cancer was the most common cancer diagnosed in 2016, continuing a trend in which it has been the most frequently diagnosed cancer in England since 1996.¹⁸ Prostate cancer was the most common cancer diagnosed in men in 2016.¹⁹ Those aged 65 or over accounted for 65.3% of the total cancers registered in 2016.²⁰

Survival Rates

On 24 January 2019, the ONS released data for 2012 to 2016 on one- and five-year net survival rates for adults in England with one of 29 common cancers.²¹ The table below presents the data for those cancers for which both a one-year and five-year net survival rate was available. The net survival rate is the probability of survival derived solely from the risk of death from the cancer alone, expressed as a percentage.²² The lowest one-year survival rate was for liver cancer (36.7%) and the lowest five-year survival rate was for brain cancer (11.3%). Melanoma (skin cancer) had the highest one-year and five-year survival rates (98% and 91.6%, respectively).²³

Table 1: One-year and Five-year Age-standardised Net Survival by Cancer Site, 2012–2016 (Percent)²⁴

Cancer Site	1 Year	5 Year
Anus	84.3	61.1
Bladder	74.8	55.1
Brain	38.7	11.3
Breast (Women)	95.8	85.3
Cervix (Women)	81.1	60.8

Cancer Site	1 Year	5 Year
Colon	76.2	58.0
Colorectal	78.5	59.1
Hodgkin	90.4	81.9
Kidney	78.4	63.3
Kidney and urinary tract	77.7	60.9
Larynx (Men)	84.2	63.9
Leukaemia	71.7	52.6
Liver	36.7	12.1
Lung	39.6	17.7
Melanoma	98.0	91.6
Myeloma	82.1	51.7
Oesophagus	46.0	16.2
Ovary (Women)	71.3	42.1
Prostate (Men)	96.5	87.1
Rectal	83.2	60.5
Stomach	47.1	20.9
Thyroid	91.2	87.6
Uterus (Women)	89.6	75.7
Vulva (Women)	86.0	67.1

Policy: NHS Long Term Plan

On 7 January 2019, NHS England published the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), which set out proposals for changing NHS services in England over the next five and ten years.²⁵ The plan built on the 2014 [NHS Five Year Forward View](#), and followed the announcement in June 2018, by the Prime Minister, Theresa May, of an increase in the NHS budget averaging 3.4 percent a year between 2019/20 and 2023/24.²⁶

The *NHS Long Term Plan* set out new strategies for improving disease prevention, including in areas that pose a cancer risk, such as obesity, air pollution, and smoking and alcohol consumption.²⁷ Chapter 3 of the plan focused on improving care quality and outcomes for a range of major health conditions, including cancer.²⁸ The plan stated that, although cancer survival in England was “the highest it’s ever been”, improvements could be made to early diagnosis.²⁹ The plan set an ambition of increasing the proportion of cancers diagnosed early from 50% to 75% by 2028.³⁰ Other commitments made concerning cancer care included:³¹

- investment in new equipment, including CT and MRI scanners;
- from 2019, the roll out of new rapid diagnostic centres;
- by 2020, a new faster diagnosis standard for cancer, with patients receiving a definitive diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days; and
- by 2021, every person diagnosed with cancer would have access to a personalised care plan.

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- ¹ World Cancer Day, '[Our Story](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ² World Cancer Day, '[Frequently Asked Questions](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ³ World Health Organisation, '[Cancer](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ⁴ Union for International Cancer Control, '[About Us](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ⁵ Union for International Cancer Control, '[Map of Members](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ⁶ Union for International Cancer Control, '[World Cancer Declaration](#)', 2013.
- ⁷ World Cancer Day, '[I Am and I Will](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁹ World Health Organisation, '[Cancer](#)', accessed 25 January 2019.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹¹ World Health Organisation, '[Cancer: Key Facts](#)', 12 September 2018.
- ¹² *ibid.*
- ¹³ *ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Office for National Statistics, '[Cancer Registration Statistics, England: 2016](#)', 4 June 2018.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*
- ²⁰ *ibid.*
- ²¹ Office for National Statistics, '[Dataset: Cancer Survival in England—Adults Diagnosed](#)', 24 January 2019.
- ²² Office for National Statistics, '[Dataset: Cancer Survival in England—Adults Diagnosed: Background Notes and References](#)', 24 January 2019.
- ²³ Office for National Statistics, '[Dataset: Cancer Survival in England—Adults Diagnosed: Table 3](#)', 24 January 2019.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*, data for adults in England, men and women unless stated.
- ²⁵ NHS England, '[NHS Long Term Plan](#)', 7 January 2019.
- ²⁶ Department for Health and Social Care, '[Prime Minister Sets Out 5-year NHS Funding Plan](#)', 18 June 2018.
- ²⁷ NHS England, '[NHS Long Term Plan](#)', 7 January 2019, p 7.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, p 56.
- ²⁹ *ibid.*
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, p 57.
- ³¹ *ibid.*, pp 59–61.

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