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**Coverage**

England and Wales

**Theme**

Health and Care

# Cancer survival, England and Wales, 1991-2001

New survival statistics for cancers of the lung, breast (in women), colon and prostate for adult patients in England and Wales diagnosed during 1991-99 and followed up to 31 December 2001 are released today by the Office for National Statistics.

Five-year age-standardised\* relative survival rates for adult patients (aged 15-99 years) diagnosed with cancer during 1991-95 and 1996-99 are given in the table below for the four most common cancers in men and in women. These account for around 50 per cent of all cancers in adults.

## Five-year relative survival (%) for adult patients diagnosed during 1991-95 and 1996-99, major cancers, England and Wales

Cancer		1991-95		1996-99	
		No. of patients	Survival* (%)	No. of patients	Survival* (%)
Lung	Men	119,066	5.2	85,425	5.8
	Women	60,817	5.4	50,690	6.4
Breast	Women	157,278	72.8	139,221	77.5
Colon	Men	43,193	42.1	38,887	46.9
	Women	47,883	42.8	40,236	47.9
Prostate	Men	87,466	53.6	85,448	64.8

\* As cancer survival varies with age at diagnosis, rates have been age-standardised to control for changes in the age profile of cancer patients over time, thus making them comparable with previously published figures

A more detailed table giving the five-year age standardised relative survival rates with 95 per cent confidence intervals for the above four cancers is available on the National Statistics website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=7091>

Issued by  
National Statistics  
1 Drummond Gate  
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone  
Press Office 020-7533 5702  
Public Enquiries 020-7533 5888

Statistician  
Mike Quinn 020-7533 5257  
Email [mike.quinn@ons.gov.uk](mailto:mike.quinn@ons.gov.uk)

Internet  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/releases](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/releases)

Compared with results for patients diagnosed on average almost five years earlier during 1991-95, the five-year survival figures for patients diagnosed during 1996-99 were around 5 percentage points higher for breast cancer in women and for colon cancer. For prostate cancer, there was a rise of 11 percentage points, but much of this was due to increasingly widespread use of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing (see background note 5). Survival for lung cancer was only slightly higher, by just over half a percentage point in men and by one percentage point in women.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Corresponding figures for patients diagnosed during 1971-90 and followed up to 31 December 1995 were published by ONS in Coleman MP et al. *Cancer survival trends in England and Wales, 1971- 1995: deprivation and NHS region*. Studies in Medical and Population Subjects No.61. London: The Stationery Office, 1999.
2. The survival figures published here were produced in collaboration between ONS and a team at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) which was funded in part by a grant from Cancer Research UK.
3. Detailed tables giving both one- and five-year survival by sex and age group for the 20 most common cancers are in preparation and will be released on the National Statistics website in early 2004.
4. The National Cancer Intelligence Centre at ONS, and the LSHTM, are grateful for all the work of the regional cancer registries in England and of the Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit over the years that the national cancer registration scheme has been in operation.
5. The PSA test enables some invasive prostate cancers to be identified earlier than in the past, leading to an increase in survival time (between diagnosis and death) even for men whose death is not necessarily postponed. However, the PSA test also identifies some latent, non-lethal tumours that may never cause symptoms and may never be diagnosed in life. Both groups of patients are included in survival analyses.
6. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
7. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2003.