

24 February 2025

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Breast cancer cases and deaths are projected to rise globally

1. What is new in this study?

This report¹ presents the newest estimates for the current and future global breast cancer burden in terms of the number of new cancer cases (incidence) of breast cancer and the number of deaths (mortality) from breast cancer. Furthermore, it also examines trends in the burden over the past decade in countries where high-quality data are available.

2. Why provide a new analysis of the global burden of breast cancer?

This study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the past trends, current rates, and future estimates of the breast cancer burden. It highlights that breast cancer is and will continue to be a global health priority, with 3.2 million new cases and 1.1 million deaths due to breast cancer projected to occur in 2050.

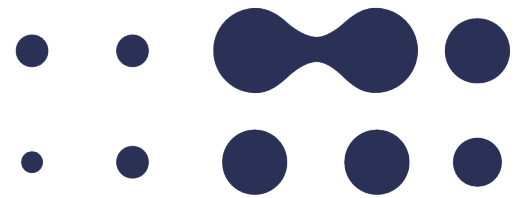
3. Why are these new results important?

The report shows success in breast cancer control in some countries, where breast cancer mortality rates are decreasing. However, it clearly indicates that breast cancer incidence rates are rising in many countries. The results can be used to support ongoing initiatives to reduce breast cancer incidence and mortality, and to allocate resources to address countries' needs for breast cancer early diagnosis, screening, and treatment.

4. What are the implications of these new findings?

Countries that are undergoing economic and demographic transitions should anticipate rises in the burden of female breast cancer. Implementing preventive strategies that target known risk factors may help to mitigate this rise. Examples of such initiatives are: taxing alcohol and tobacco; promoting healthier diets and physical activity; adopting national transportation policies that prioritize walking, cycling, and public transportation; building safe environments for walking and cycling and sport; investing in maternity leave; supporting women's rights to breastfeed in public and at workplaces; and enforcing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes to put an end to aggressive marketing of breast-milk alternatives by the food industry.

¹ Kim J, Harper A, McCormack V, Sung H, Houssami N, Morgan E, et al. (2025). Global patterns and trends in breast cancer incidence and mortality across 185 countries. *Nat Med*. Published online 24 February 2025; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-025-03502-3>



5. What explains the estimated increase in the number of cases and deaths by 2050? Which key factors are driving the rise in cases and deaths predicted by 2050?

The future projections of the global breast cancer burden presented in this report are based only on demographic changes predicted by 2050. This assumes that current breast cancer rates continue until 2050. Projections that incorporate changes in cancer rates can be viewed on the [Global Cancer Observatory: Cancer Tomorrow website](#).

6. What can be done to address the observed inequalities in breast cancer mortality rates in countries with higher versus lower Human Development Index (HDI) levels?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Breast Cancer Initiative, effective strategies to improve breast cancer survival include facilitating early detection and ensuring timely access to appropriate treatment. Inclusion of breast cancer screening and treatment in a country's universal health coverage or essential health benefit package is a critical factor to avoid delays in diagnosis and seeking care, thereby enabling early detection and improvements in survival.

7. Are these results official in regard to countries meeting the goals of the Global Breast Cancer Initiative?

This report aims to provide a comprehensive and updated analysis on the burden of breast cancer globally. Although the Global Breast Cancer Initiative benchmark of a 2.5% decrease in breast cancer mortality rates per year is useful to put the 10-year trend estimates in context, this report does not present a formal evaluation of Global Breast Cancer Initiative goals.

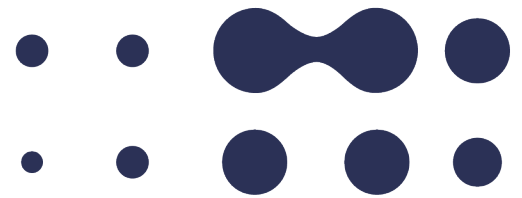
8. Why are the future projections in the report slightly different to those on the Global Cancer Observatory website?

The original Global Cancer Observatory future projections, available on the Cancer Tomorrow website, were based on the United Nations World Population Projections published in 2019. An updated version was published in 2024, and in response to a reviewer's suggestion, these new data were incorporated into the estimates presented in this report.

For more information, please contact

Veronique Terrasse, at terrassev@iarc.who.int
or IARC Communications, at com@iarc.who.int

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and



to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.who.int.