



Media backgrounder: Cancer in Canada

Canadian Cancer Statistics 2021 provides comprehensive, up-to-date statistics on the burden of cancer in Canada and is released by the Canadian Cancer Society in collaboration with Statistics Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Current estimates of new cases and deaths

- 2 in 5 Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, and 1 in 4 Canadians is expected to die of the disease.
- In 2021 alone, an estimated 229,200 Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer and nearly 85,000 are expected to die of the disease.
- In 2021, approximately 26 people will be diagnosed with cancer and 10 will die of cancer every hour of every day.
- Since the cancer death rate peaked in 1988, it has decreased almost 30% overall (37% in males and 22% in females).
- Cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada, accounting for 28% of all deaths.
- Over 1,000 children are expected to be diagnosed with cancer this year (1,050).
- The number of new cancer cases and deaths each year is rising steadily because the Canadian population is growing and aging.

Common cancers

There are more than 100 different types of cancer, but 4 of them – lung, breast, colorectal and prostate – are expected to account for almost half (46%) of all new cancer cases diagnosed in Canada in 2021.

Lung cancer

- Lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canada (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers).
- An estimated 29,600 Canadians will be diagnosed with lung cancer in 2021 and 21,000 are expected to die of the disease.
- On average, 81 Canadians will be diagnosed with lung cancer every day, and 58 Canadians will die of it every day.
- Lung cancer leads to the death of more Canadians than colorectal, pancreatic and breast cancers combined.
- In 2021, lung cancer is expected to be the leading cause of cancer-related death in Canada, accounting for one-quarter (25%) of all cancer deaths.
- Lung cancer incidence and death rates are decreasing in both males and females. Since its peak in 1988, the lung cancer death rate has decreased by more than half (53%) in males. It has decreased 15% in females since its peak in 2006 and 33% for both sexes combined since the rate peaked in 1993.
- 5-year lung cancer survival is 22%, up from 13% in the early 1990s.
- A recent study, called ComPARE, found about 86% of lung cancers can be prevented. Tobacco smoking is the leading preventable cause of lung cancer, accounting for 72% of all lung cancer cases.



Breast cancer

- Breast cancer continues to be the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer related death among Canadian women.
- An estimated 27,700 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Canada in 2021 and approximately 5,400 women are expected to die of the disease. More than 80% of breast cancers occur in women who are 50 and over.
- 1 in 8 Canadian women is expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime and 1 in 34 is expected to die of breast cancer.
- Since its peak in 1986, the breast cancer death rate has decreased 46% in females. This reduction likely reflects research progress that has led to improvements in screening and treatment for breast cancer.
- 5-year breast cancer survival is 89%, up from 82% in the early 1990s.
- The ComPARE study found about 28% of breast cancer cases in females can be prevented.

Colorectal cancer

- Colorectal cancer is expected to be the 3rd most commonly diagnosed cancer and the 2nd leading cause of cancer related death in Canada.
- An estimated 24,800 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2021 and 9,600 will die of the disease.
- It is estimated that about 1 in 16 men and 1 in 19 women will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer during their lifetime.
- The 5-year survival rate for colorectal cancer is about 67%.
- Colorectal cancer death rates are going down for both men and women, likely a result of research that has led to increased understanding of risk factors, improvements in screening and advancements in treatment.

About Canadian Cancer Statistics

Canadian Cancer Statistics is developed through a collaboration of the Canadian Cancer Society, Statistics Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada with data provided by the provincial and territorial cancer registries. Statistics Canada completed all analyses related to projecting incidence and mortality and all analyses related to survival. The Public Health Agency of Canada completed analyses related to assessing trends over time and estimating the probability of developing and dying of cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society coordinates the production and dissemination of this publication and supports it with charitable funds. For more than 30 years, this publication has been providing information that helps decide what support and services are needed and what research should be done. It also helps assess the impact of prevention, early detection and treatment. For more information about Canadian Cancer Statistics, visit cancer.ca/statistics.



Canadian
Cancer
Society

About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society works tirelessly to save and improve lives. We fund the brightest minds in cancer research. We provide a compassionate support system for all those affected by cancer, from coast to coast and for all types of cancer. As the voice for Canadians who care about cancer, we work with governments to establish health policies to prevent cancer and better support those living with the disease. No other organization does all that we do to improve lives today and to change the future of cancer forever.

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