

**Breast cancer in  
Australian women  
1982–1996**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is an independent health and welfare statistics and information agency. The Institute's mission is to inform community discussion and decision making through national leadership in the development and provision of authoritative and timely information on the health and welfare of Australians.

The Australasian Association of Cancer Registries (AACR) is a collaborative body representing State and Territory cancer registries in Australia and New Zealand. Most are members of the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR). The AACR was formed in November 1982, with the backing of the IACR, to provide a formal mechanism for promoting uniformity of collection, classification and collation of cancer data.

The purposes of the AACR are

- to provide a continuing framework for the development of population-based cancer registration in Australia and New Zealand;
- to facilitate exchange of scientific and technical information between cancer registries and to promote standardisation in the collection and classification of cancer data;
- to facilitate cancer research both nationally and internationally;
- to facilitate the dissemination of cancer information.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has joined with the AACR to produce national cancer statistics through the establishment of the National Cancer Statistics Clearing House.

The National Breast Cancer Centre (NBCC) works in partnership with women, health professionals, cancer organisations, researchers and governments to improve breast cancer outcomes for women. It was established to improve breast cancer control by

- analysing research and making it readily available to women and health professionals;
- developing, disseminating and encouraging the adoption of clinical guidelines to improve the diagnosis, treatment and support of women with breast cancer; providing accurate and accessible information to well women, women with breast cancer, primary care providers and breast cancer specialists; and developing a national monitoring system to provide information about all aspects of breast cancer.

Goals of the Centre

- ensuring that all women and health professionals have a balanced understanding of the incidence of and risk factors for breast cancer;
- ensuring that all women with breast cancer are diagnosed as early as possible;
- ensuring that all women diagnosed with breast cancer receive 'state of the art' treatment;
- ensuring that all women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families receive adequate psychosocial, physical and practical support;
- developing networks and infrastructure to increase breast cancer control;
- developing a national monitoring system for breast cancer outcomes.

CANCER SERIES

# **Breast cancer in Australian women 1982–1996**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Australasian Association of Cancer Registries  
NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre  
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. CAN 6

© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1999

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to the Head, Communication and Public Affairs, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601.

This publication is part of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Cancer Series. A complete list of the Institute's publications is available from the Publications Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601, or via the Institute's web site (<http://www.aihw.gov.au>).

ISSN 1039-3307  
ISBN 1 74024 006 5

### **Suggested citation**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Australasian Association of Cancer Registries & NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre 1999. Breast cancer in Australian women 1982–1996. Canberra: AIHW (Cancer Series).

### **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare**

Board Chair  
Professor Janice Reid

Director  
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Dr Paul Jelfs  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6244 1140

Published by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Printed by National Capital Printing

# Contents

Summary .....	vii
Incidence and mortality .....	vii
Acknowledgments .....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Guide to this report.....	2
Data sources and quality .....	2
Methods .....	3
Most common cancers in women in Australia .....	7
Deaths from common cancers in women in Australia .....	8
New cases of breast cancer and deaths from breast cancer.....	9
Risk of breast cancer by age .....	10
National incidence and mortality rates .....	11
National trends in incidence and mortality .....	12
National incidence rates by age .....	13
National incidence trends by age .....	14
National mortality rates by age .....	16
National mortality trends by age.....	17
State and Territory incidence and mortality trends .....	19
State and Territory incidence rates by age.....	22
State and Territory mortality rates by age .....	24
Urban and rural incidence rates .....	26
Urban and rural mortality rates.....	27
Appendix 1: Tables and figures .....	28
Tables list .....	28
Figures list.....	29
Appendix 2: Additional tables .....	31
Glossary and abbreviations.....	50
References .....	52



# Summary

## Incidence and mortality

### Australia

Age-standardised rates referred to in this summary are age-standardised to the Australian 1991 Population Standard (see page 4).

#### In 1996

- With 9,556 new cases, breast cancer was the most common cancer diagnosed in women in Australia (apart from non-melanocytic skin cancers).
- With 2,619 deaths, breast cancer was the most common cause of cancer death in women in Australia.

#### Between 1982 and 1996

- The age-standardised incidence rate increased from 70 per 100,000 woman-years in 1982 to 101 new cases per 100,000 in 1995; it fell to 95 per 100,000 in 1996. The most significant rise occurred shortly after the introduction of mammographic screening.
- The most substantial increase in age-standardised incidence rates was recorded for women aged 50–69: a rise of 55%, from 175 per 100,000 in 1982 to 271 per 100,000 in 1996.
- There was little change in age-standardised incidence rates for women aged 15–39 years, while rates increased by 24% for women aged 40–49 years, and 27% for women aged 70 years and over.
- Age-standardised mortality rates remained stable, at around 25 to 27 deaths per 100,000 woman-years between 1982 and 1996.

#### Between 1992 and 1996

- On average, each year 9,166 women were diagnosed with breast cancer and 2,593 women died from it.
- Breast cancer was rare in women younger than 40 years, with an average of 640 new cases diagnosed each year (18 new cases per 100,000 woman-years).
- The age-standardised incidence rate was 146 per 100,000 woman-years for women aged 40–49 years, 265 per 100,000 for women aged 50–69 years, and 304 per 100,000 for women aged 70 years and older.
- Death from breast cancer was rare in women aged under 40 years, with 3 deaths per 100,000 woman-years (or an average of 113 deaths each year).
- The age-standardised mortality rate was 27 per 100,000 woman-years for women aged 40–49 years, 67 for women aged 50–69 years, and 127 per 100,000 for women aged 70 years and over.

## **States and Territories**

### **In the periods 1982–1986, 1987–1991 and 1992–1996**

- Age-standardised breast cancer incidence rates increased in each State and Territory.
- Age-standardised breast cancer mortality rates fell between 1987–1991 and 1992–1996 in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

## **Urban and rural areas of usual residence**

### **In the periods 1987–1991 and 1992–1996**

- In 1987–1991, the age-standardised breast cancer incidence rate was 7.3% higher in urban areas of Australia than in rural areas. In 1992–1996 the incidence rate in urban areas was 5.4% higher than in rural areas.
- For the two 5-year time periods, incidence rates increased by 14% in urban areas and by 16% in rural areas. This increase occurred around the same time as the introduction of mammographic screening. There was, however, very little change in breast cancer mortality rates.

# Acknowledgments

This report was sponsored by the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Breast Cancer Centre and produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the members of the Australasian Association of Cancer Registries.

Its production would not have been possible without the cooperation and effort of those who direct the operation, promotion and development of the State and Territory cancer registries and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare staff responsible for the operation of the National Cancer Statistics Clearing House. These people, listed below, have all worked together to produce the national breast cancer incidence and mortality statistics in this report. In particular, we acknowledge Professor Bruce Armstrong, Professor Annette Dobson, Dr Joanne Aitken and Professor Graham Giles who reviewed the report.

Incidence information is received predominantly from hospitals, pathologists and departments of radiation oncology; supplementary information is provided by private medical practitioners. The main contributors of information on cancer deaths are the State and Territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. We thank them all for their efforts.

Funding and support of cancer registries in Australia is provided by State and Territory governments and various charities. We acknowledge the support of the State and Territory governments, the New South Wales Cancer Council, the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, the Queensland Cancer Fund, the Cancer Foundation of Western Australia, the Northern Territory Anti-Cancer Foundation and the Australian Cancer Society. Finally, the contributions of the staff and volunteers who work with the State and Territory cancer registries are acknowledged.

Funding for the NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre comes from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.

**Australian Institute of Health and Welfare** – Dr Paul Jelfs, Ms Anne-Marie Waters, Ms Sarojini Martin, Mr Robert van der Hoek, Ms Carolyn Dunn, Ms Justine Boland, Ms Kathy Southgate, Ms Amanda Nobbs

**National Breast Cancer Centre** – Dr Anne Krickler

**New South Wales** – Professor Bruce Armstrong, Mrs Marylon Coates, Mrs Noreen Panos, Mrs Maria Arcorace

**Victoria** – Professor Graham Giles, Ms Kathryn Whitfield, Ms Vicky Thursfield, Ms Sue Douglas

**Queensland** – Dr Ian Ring, Mrs Judy Symmons, Ms Sue Cornes

**Western Australia** – Dr Tim Threlfall, Dr Judy Thompson

**South Australia** – Associate Professor David Roder, Ms Lesley Milliken

**Tasmania** – Professor Terence Dwyer, Mrs Dace Shugg

**Australian Capital Territory** – Dr Bruce Shadbolt

**Northern Territory** – Dr John Condon, Ms Mary-Anne Measey

