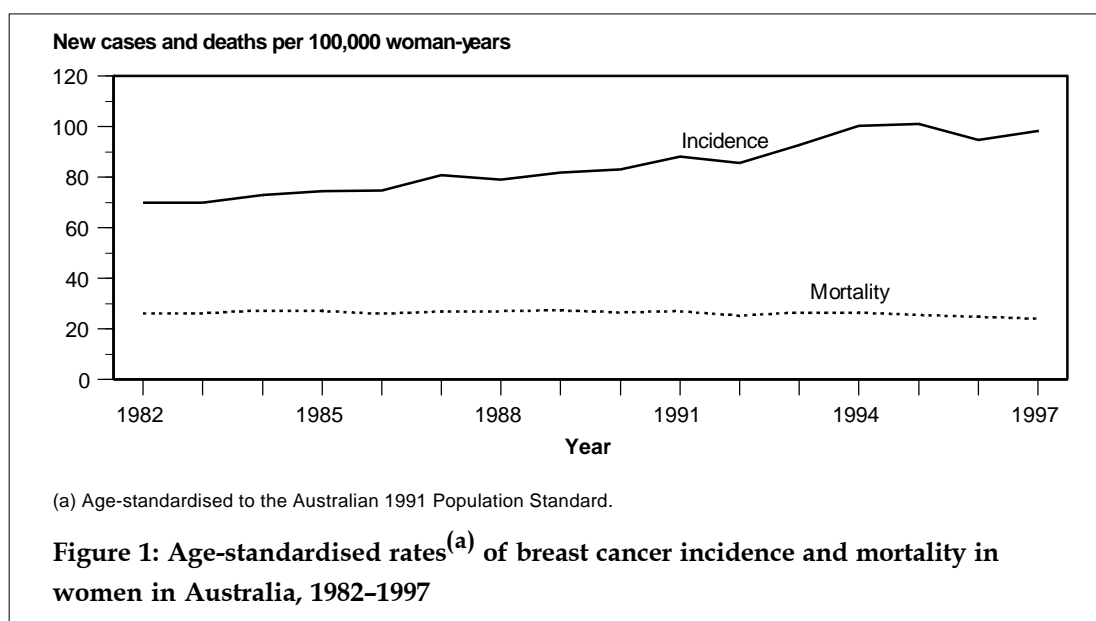


New breast cancer data for 1997

New national data has recently become available to estimate breast cancer incidence and death rates for 1997. These data, provided by the State and Territory cancer registries to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare are the most current as at September 1999. The data for Victoria are preliminary, although not expected to change significantly. These new data build on that released in the *Breast Cancer in Australian Women 1982–1996* (AIHW, AACR 1999) report released in August 1999.

Patterns of breast cancer

In 1997 there were 10,144 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed, an increase of nearly 600 new cases over the previous year. After non-melanocytic skin cancer, breast cancer remains the most common form of cancer in women, and is the most common cause of cancer death. The national trends (Figure 1) show that breast cancer incidence rates for 1997 have maintained the long term increase observed between 1982 and 1996 (approximately 2.2% per year). Despite falls between 1995 and 1996, the incidence rate for 1997 (98.5 new cases per 100,000) has increased by 3.4% over the previous year. The risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer before age 75 remains at 1 in 12.



Although no single age group showed a significant increase in incidence rates, the biggest contributors were those aged 35–39, 50–54, 65–69 and 75–79 where an increase of more than 5% was observed. Some increases were expected in the 50–69 year age group, as this is the target age group for the BreastScreen Australia program, while increases in the younger and older age groups remain within the expected annual fluctuations in incidence rates.

Breast cancer deaths showed almost no change from previous years with 2,602 being recorded in 1997. The fall in death rates from 24.9 deaths per 100,000 in 1996 to 24.2 in 1997 is a small one (Figure 1) but is the third consecutive annual fall and builds on

the longer term downward trend of nearly 1% per year. While the general trend for death rates is downward for all age groups, the 1997 deaths data show that the largest decreases have occurred in those over the age of 55.

States and Territories

A State and Territory comparison of the breast cancer incidence rates shows no significant differences between them, with the national rise in incidence rates generally shared across most States and Territories. Additional data for South Australia only for 1998 also show a substantial increase in incidence rates (108.3 new cases per 100,000).

No significant differences were found between the States and Territories in death rates. The national fall in death rates between 1996 and 1997 occurred in most jurisdictions, however the falls prior to that have shown inconsistency in their timing as the benefits of the screening programs and new treatment regimes have not been evenly spread.

Table 1: Numbers of new cases and deaths, and age-standardised incidence and mortality rates^(a), in each State and Territory, 1997 (95% confidence intervals)

States and Territories	New cases			Deaths		
	Number	AS Rate (Aust 1991)	AS Rate (World)	Number	AS Rate (Aust 1991)	AS Rate (World)
New South Wales	3,498	98.3 (95.0–101.6)	81.1 (78.3–83.9)	901	24.3 (22.7–26.0)	18.8 (17.5–20.1)
Victoria ^(b)	2,505	95.1 (91.3–98.8)	78.0 (74.8–81.2)	730	26.5 (24.6–28.5)	20.3 (18.7–21.9)
Queensland	1,907	106.1 (101.3–110.9)	87.1 (83.0–91.1)	412	21.9 (19.8–24.1)	17.1 (15.3–18.8)
Western Australia	923	99.7 (93.2–106.2)	81.4 (76.0–86.9)	228	23.5 (20.4–26.6)	18.3 (15.8–20.8)
South Australia	888	98.9 (92.3–105.5)	81.0 (75.3–86.6)	232	23.7 (20.6–26.8)	17.6 (15.1–20.1)
Tasmania	230	82.9 (72.0–93.8)	67.6 (58.4–76.9)	54	18.5 (13.5–23.5)	13.9 (9.9–17.9)
Australian Capital Territory	143	99.8 (82.9–116.6)	82.1 (68.3–96.0)	35	24.5 (16.1–32.9)	18.6 (12.2–25.0)
Northern Territory	50	75.8 (52.0–99.5)	66.7 (46.6–86.8)	10	19.7 (5.2–34.3)	14.4 (4.8–24.1)
Australia	10,144	98.5 (96.6–100.5)	80.9 (79.3–82.6)	2,602	24.2 (23.3–25.2)	18.6 (17.8–19.4)

(a) Age-standardised rates are expressed per 100,000 woman-years and are age-standardised to the Australian 1991 Population Standard (AS Rate (Aust 1991)) and the World Standard Population (AS Rate (World)). See "Methods" pages 3 and 4.

(b) Victorian incidence data are preliminary as at September 1999.