

6 Cancer of the rectum

Summary

In 1992–1997, relative survival one year after diagnosis with cancer of the rectum was 82.2% for males and 82.6% for females. Five-year relative survival for the period 1992–1997 was 56.6% for males and 60.6% for females (Table 6.1). Ten years after diagnosis, relative survival proportions were 44.1% for males and 51.0% for females in 1987–1991, the most recent period for which ten-year relative survival data are available (Tables 6.2 and 6.3).

There has been a significant increase in relative survival proportions for cancer of the rectum between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997 (Figure 6.2; Tables 6.2 and 6.3). One-year relative survival increased by 4.3 percentage points for males and 5.0 percentage points for females, and five-year relative survival increased by 7.9 percentage points for males and 8.3 percentage points for females.

There was no clear relationship between rectal cancer five-year relative survival and age. Five-year relative survival was highest for males aged 30–39 years (64.4%) and females aged 50–59 years (65.2%) (Figure 6.3; Table 6.1).

There were significant increases in five-year relative survival proportions between the periods 1982–1986 and 1992–1997 for males aged from 50–59 to 80–89 years and females aged from 50–59 to 70–79 years. All the other age groups showed no significant difference between the diagnosis periods (Figure 6.3; Tables 6.5 and 6.6).

Table 6.1: Cancer of the rectum: number of new cases and deaths, and five-year relative survival proportions, by age at diagnosis and sex, Australia, 1992–1997

Age	New cases		Deaths		5-year relative survival (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0–19 years	2	3	1	1	*	*
20–29 years	30	27	15	12	46.3	58.7
30–39 years	180	208	64	71	64.4	63.1
40–49 years	907	659	359	226	59.3	64.9
50–59 years	2,448	1,475	996	520	60.6	65.2
60–69 years	4,370	2,211	2,113	890	56.6	62.9
70–79 years	4,013	2,635	2,298	1,287	54.1	59.6
80–89 years	1,390	1,535	1,026	1,046	49.3	49.7
90–99 years	121	235	101	210	53.7	27.5
All ages	13,461	8,988	6,973	4,263	56.6	60.6

* Interpretation difficult due to statistical instability. The instability in this age/sex/site group may be due to the survival model's handling a combination of small number of cases/deaths and or unstable background survival patterns resulting in invalid estimates. These results are therefore not presented here.

Incidence and mortality

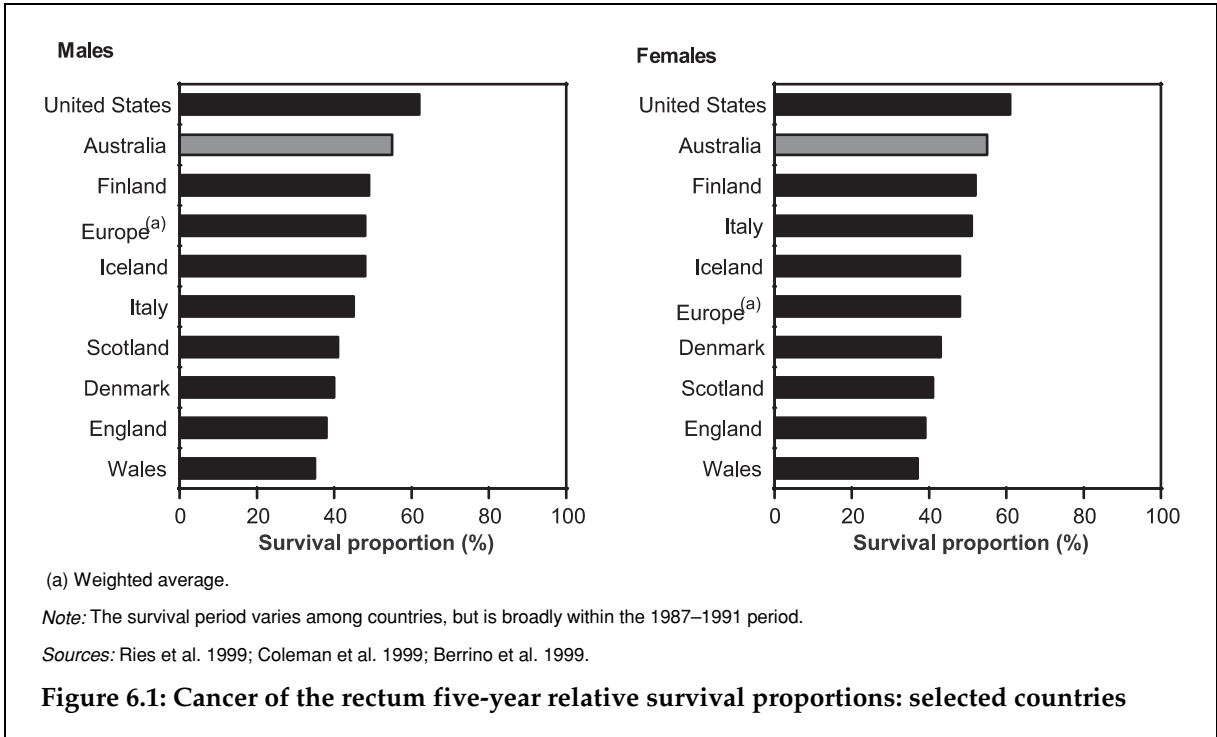
In 1997 there were 4,030 new cases of rectal cancer diagnosed. Of these, 2,447 were males and 1,583 were females.

Rectal cancer was the cause of 675 male deaths and 472 female deaths in 1997. It is estimated that each year rectal cancer is responsible for about 5,200 years of life lost in males and 3,100 years of life lost in females before the age of 75.

For the six-year period 1992–1997, age-standardised incidence rates for cancer of the rectum increased by 1.6% per annum for males and decreased slightly by 0.2% per annum for females. Age-standardised mortality rates decreased in both males and females by 2.6% and 1.9% respectively.

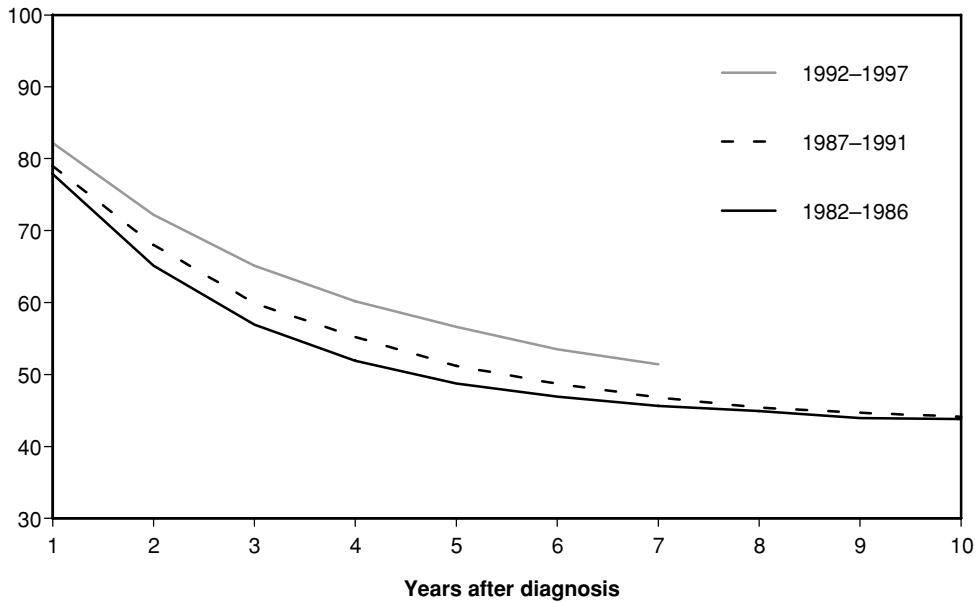
International comparisons

Five-year relative survival after diagnosis of cancer of the rectum in Australia compares favourably with the selected countries. Male five-year relative survival is about 8 percentage points lower than that for the United States and Iceland, and for females the difference with the United States is 4 percentage points.



Males

Relative survival (%)



Females

Relative survival (%)

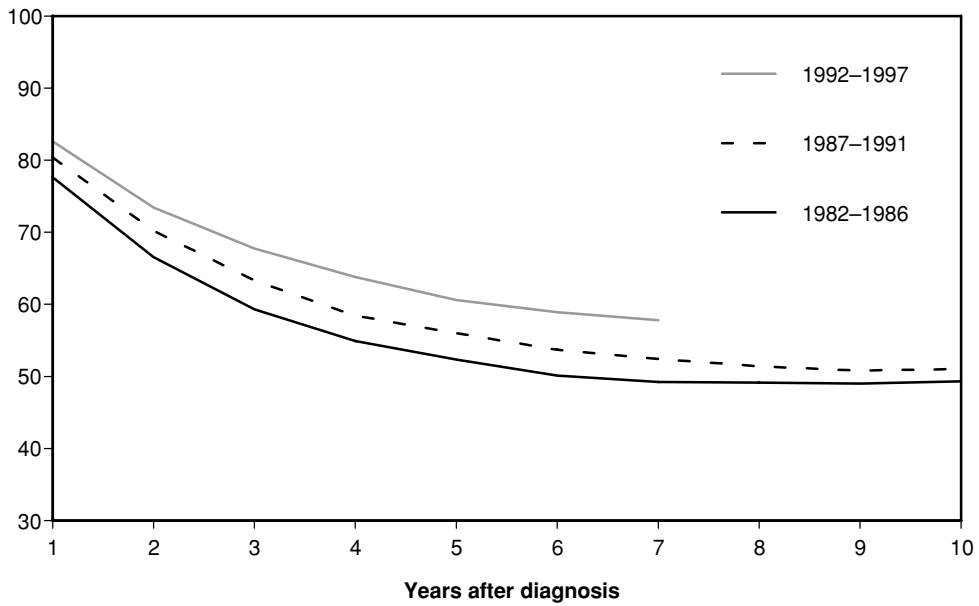
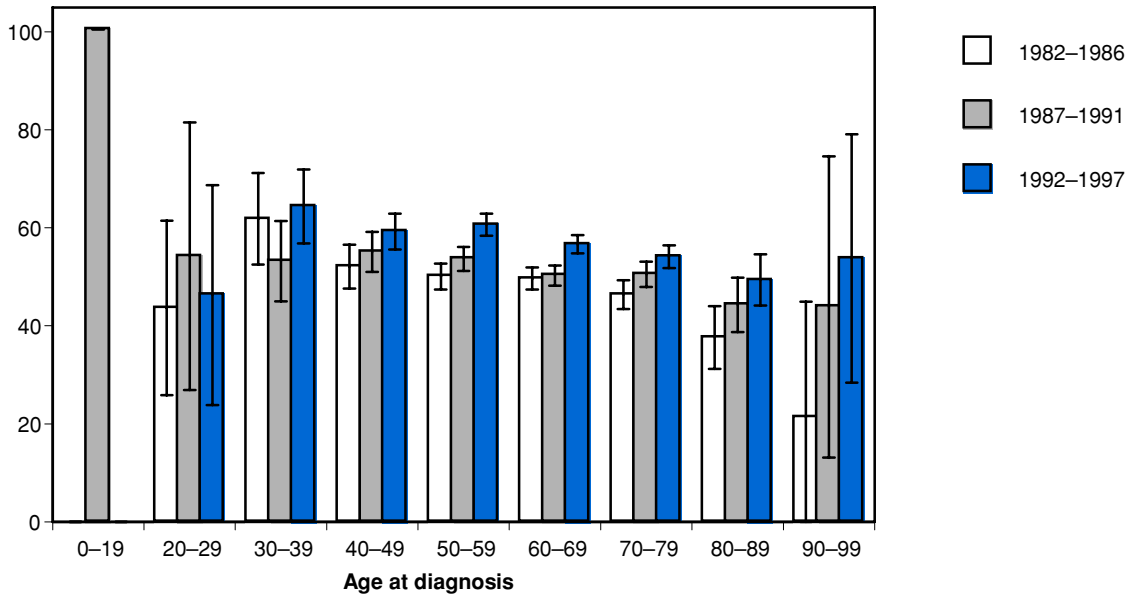


Figure 6.2: Cancer of the rectum relative survival proportions: period of diagnosis, Australia

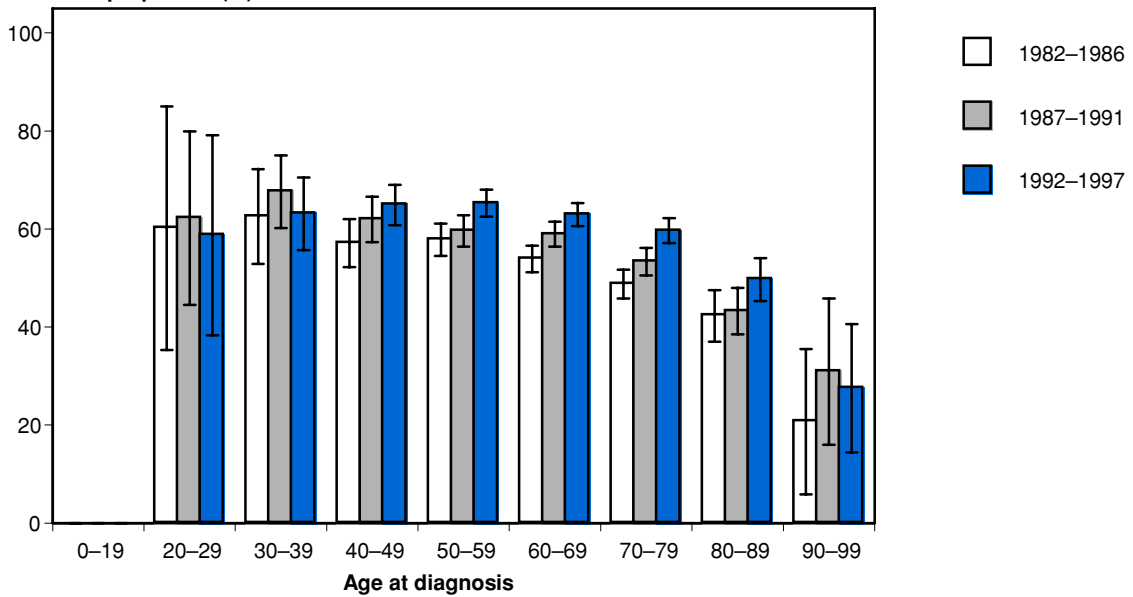
Males

Survival proportion (%)



Females

Survival proportion (%)



Note: 95% confidence intervals are shown for each age group.

Figure 6.3: Cancer of the rectum five-year relative survival proportions: age at diagnosis by period of diagnosis, Australia