

7 Cancer of the pancreas

Summary

Five-year relative survival after diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in Australia was poor, having the lowest relative survival proportions of all cancer sites studied. In 1992–1997 one-year relative survival proportions were 19.5% for males and 18.0% for females. Survival five years after diagnosis was 5.4% for males and 5.2% for females (Table 7.1). Ten-year relative survival proportions were 4.1% for males and 5.3% for females in 1987–1991, the most recent period for which ten-year relative survival data are available (Figure 7.2; Tables 7.2 and 7.3).

There were no significant changes in relative survival for males and females between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997, except for one-year relative survival for males which increased from 16.4% to 19.5% (Figure 7.2; Tables 7.2 and 7.3).

Five-year relative survival after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer was highest in the younger age groups and decreased sharply as age increased. However, the numbers of new cases and deaths were small for age groups below 30 years, making survival estimates for these age groups less robust. During 1992–1997, five-year relative survival was 11.2% for males aged 30–39 years and 24.5% for females in this age group. The relative survival proportions decreased to 6.9% for males and 5.8% for females aged 50–59 years. After this age, five-year relative survival decreased more slowly, to 2.4% in males and 3.3% in females aged 80–89 years (Figure 7.3; Table 7.1).

There was significant increase in five-year relative survival for females aged 40–49 between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997, from 6.5% to 19.3%. All other age groups showed no significant difference between the diagnosis periods (Figure 7.3; Tables 7.5 and 7.6).

Table 7.1: Cancer of the pancreas: 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	1	7	1	2	*	68.7
20–29 years	7	11	6	5	14.4	50.0
30–39 years	51	42	43	32	11.2	24.5
40–49 years	235	152	211	122	9.7	19.3
50–59 years	632	369	590	340	6.9	5.8
60–69 years	1,308	958	1,243	911	6.2	4.9
70–79 years	1,573	1,523	1,520	1,480	3.0	3.2
80–89 years	727	1,150	717	1,124	2.4	3.3
90–99 years	66	203	65	202	10.5	3.2
All ages	4,600	4,415	4,396	4,218	5.4	5.2

* 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

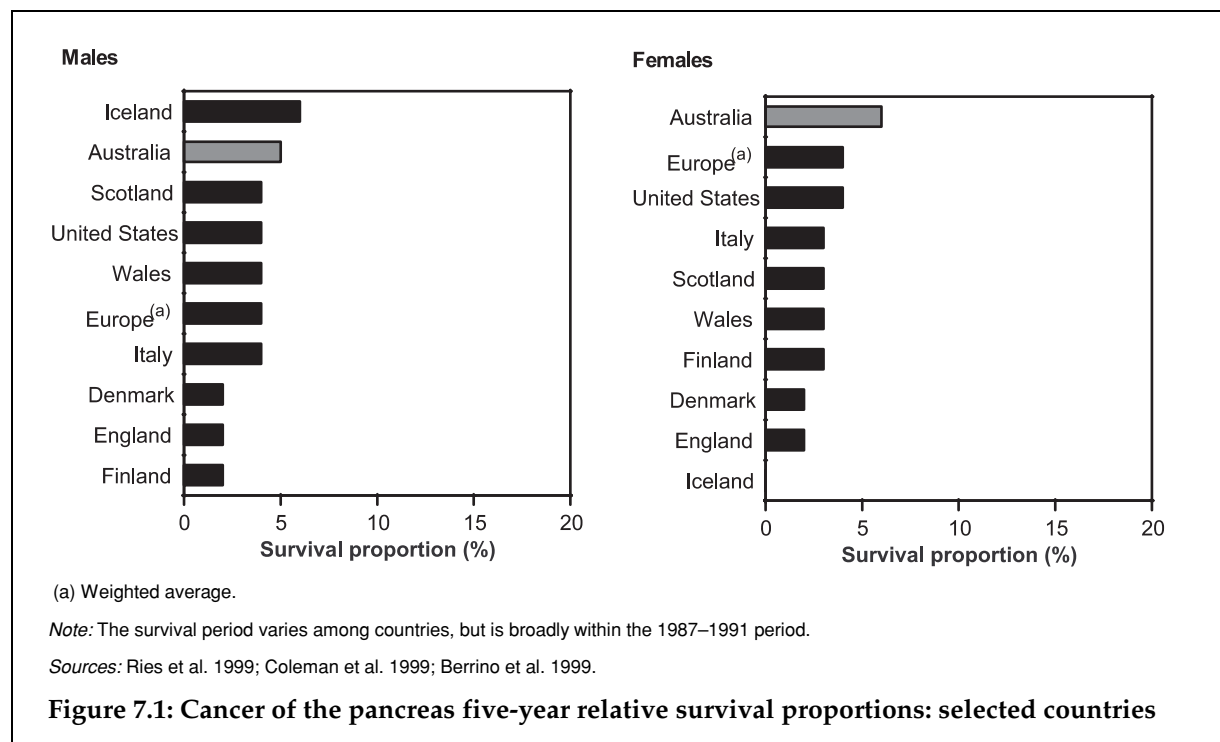
There were 829 and 845 new cases of pancreatic cancer in males and females respectively in 1997.

In 1997, 773 males and 830 females died from cancer of the pancreas. It is estimated that each year pancreatic cancer is responsible for about 5,200 male and 4,000 female years of life lost before the age of 75.

For the six-year period 1992–1997, age-standardised incidence and mortality rates for cancer of the pancreas in males decreased, with incidence falling by 0.8% per annum and mortality falling by 1.4% per annum. For females, age-standardised incidence and mortality rates showed evidence of a slight annual increase of 0.4% and 0.5%.

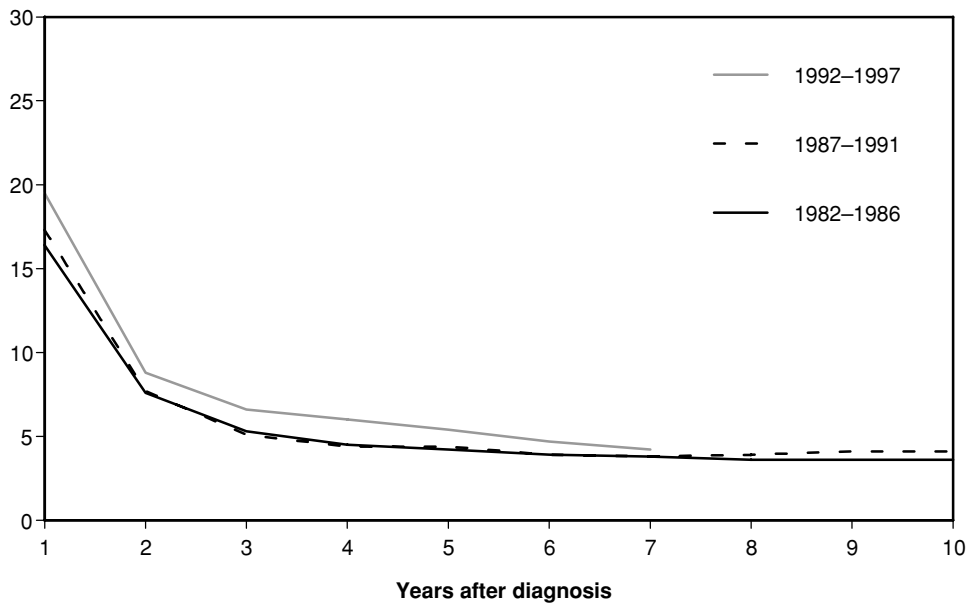
International comparisons

Five-year relative survival was poor in all the countries for which relative survival data were available. This trend was also reflected in the Australian statistics. In countries where data were available, five-year relative survival after pancreatic cancer was between 2% and 6%. The Australian relative survival proportion was not notably different from the other countries (Figure 7.3).



Males

Relative survival (%)



Females

Relative survival (%)

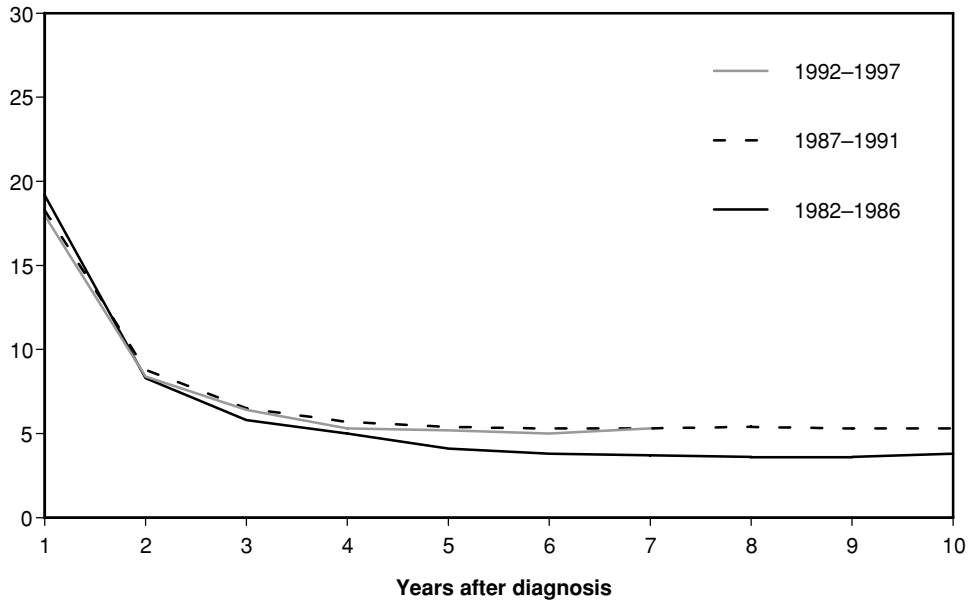
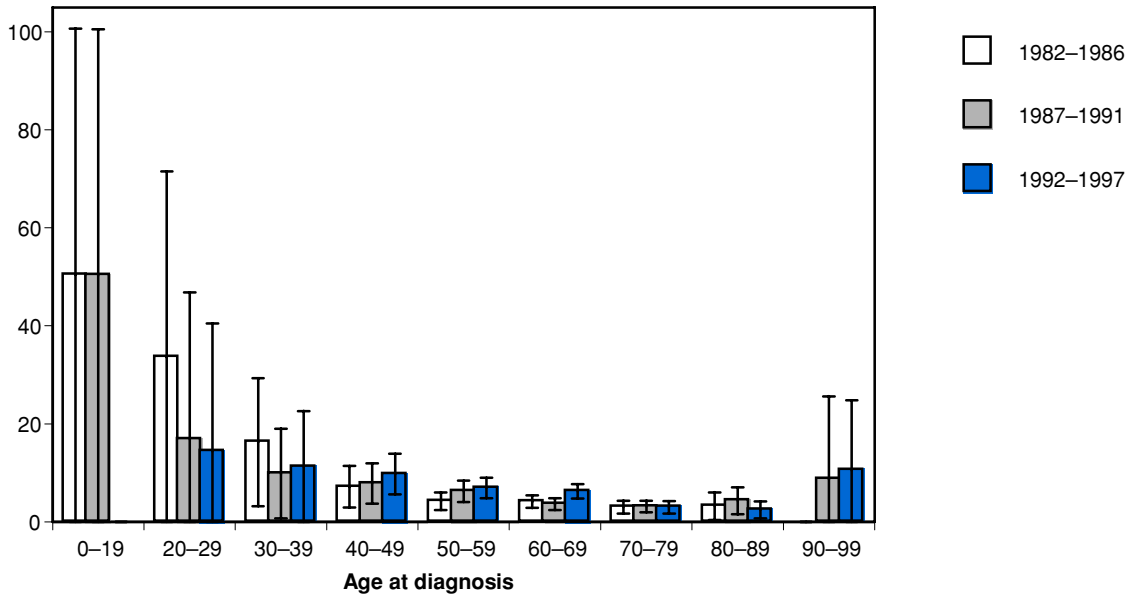


Figure 7.2: Cancer of the pancreas relative survival proportions: period of diagnosis, Australia

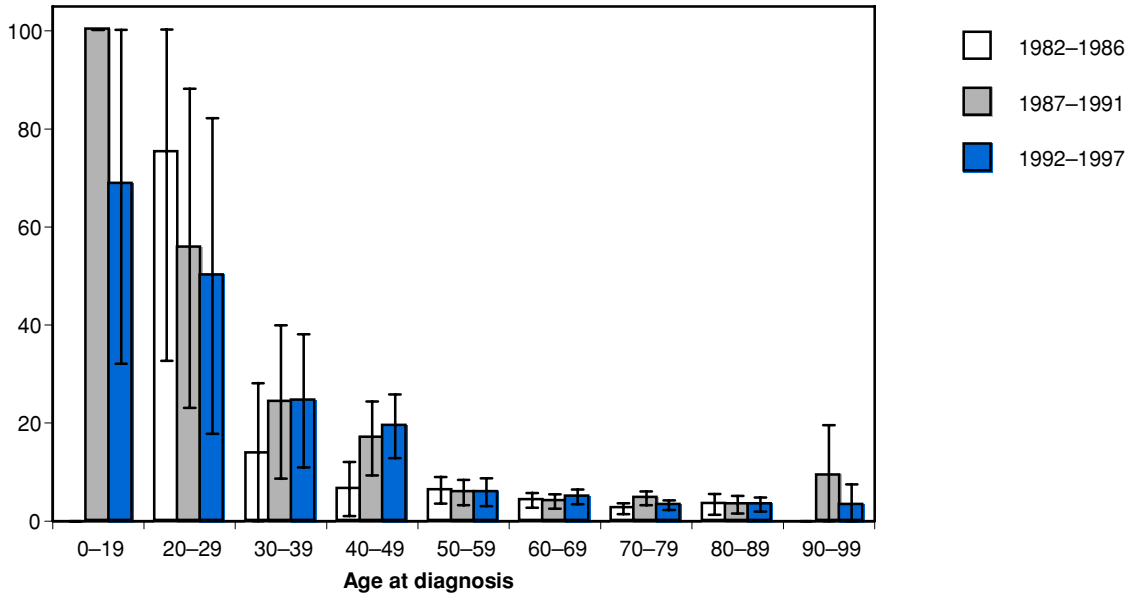
Males

Survival proportion (%)



Females

Survival proportion (%)



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

Figure 7.3: Cancer of the pancreas five-year relative survival proportions: age at diagnosis by period of diagnosis, Australia