

# 10 Cancer of the breast (female)

## Summary

Relative survival after diagnosis of breast cancer in females is good when compared with other cancer sites. For the period 1992–1997, relative survival one year after diagnosis was 96.4%, and five years after diagnosis was 84.0% (Table 10.1). Relative survival ten years after diagnosis was 68.3% in 1987–1991, the most recent period for which ten-year relative survival data are available (Figure 10.2; Table 10.2).

Between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997, there was a significant increase in relative survival after diagnosis of breast cancer. One-year relative survival increased from 94.0% to 96.4% and five-year relative survival increased from 72.3% to 84.0% (Figure 10.2; Table 10.2).

There was no clear relationship between breast cancer five-year relative survival and age. Relative survival proportions ranged from 86.1% for those aged 60–69 years to 64.7% for those aged 90–99 years (Figure 10.3; Table 10.1).

For individual age groups, there was a significant increase in relative survival between 1982–1986 and 1992–1998 for age groups between 30–39 and 70–79 years. This increase ranged from 7.7 percentage points for females aged 30–39 years to 15.0 percentage points for females aged 50–59 years (Figure 10.3; Table 10.3).

**Table 10.1: Cancer of the breast: number of new cases and deaths, and five-year relative survival proportions, by age at diagnosis, Australia, 1992–1997**

Age	New cases	Deaths	5-year relative survival (%)
0–19 years	9	1	*
20–29 years	370	98	72.4
30–39 years	3,575	727	79.8
40–49 years	11,244	1,694	85.8
50–59 years	12,834	1,976	85.7
60–69 years	12,351	2,317	86.1
70–79 years	10,159	3,041	82.8
80–89 years	4,619	2,522	72.2
90–99 years	654	513	64.7
<b>All ages</b>	<b>55,815</b>	<b>12,889</b>	<b>84.0</b>

\* 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 10,111 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in Australia and 2,596 females died from breast cancer.

It is estimated that each year about 31,000 years of life are lost before the age of 75 due to breast cancer (about 9% of all premature death for females), making breast cancer a leading cause of premature death for females in Australia.

For the six-year period 1992–1997, age-standardised incidence rates for female cancer of the breast increased by 2.1%. Age-standardised mortality rates, however, decreased by approximately 1.3% per annum.

# International comparisons

Breast cancer five-year relative survival in Australia was high (79%) when compared with other countries where relative survival information was available. The range of relative survival proportions for Western countries was high, from 64% to 85%, with Australia fourth behind the United States, Iceland and Finland (Figure 10.1; Table 10.4).





