

3 Mortality from breast cancer

The number of deaths from breast cancer in any given time period is a result of the incidence of breast cancer as well as factors that affect case fatality such as the characteristics of the breast cancers diagnosed (e.g. stage at diagnosis, type of breast cancer) and the nature and quality of treatments received. In this report, mortality refers to the number of deaths for which the underlying cause was breast cancer. The breast cancer that led to the death may have been diagnosed many years previously, in the same year in which the person died or, in some cases, after death (e.g. at autopsy). Information on the underlying cause of death is derived from the medical certificate of cause of death which is issued by a certified medical practitioner.

The main data source used in this chapter was the National Mortality Database. This database contains information about all deaths registered in Australia (see Appendix C for further information).

In this chapter, information on the number of female and male deaths attributed to breast cancer in 2006 is presented, as is trend information. In addition, for women, differences in mortality rates according to age, geographical area, socioeconomic status, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and country of birth are provided. Data for Australia are compared with data for other countries.

Mortality of females from breast cancer

Mortality in 2006

The five types of cancers that led to the largest number of cancer deaths of women in 2006 are shown in Table 3.1. Breast cancer was the second most common cause of cancer mortality of women in 2006, with 2,618 women dying from this disease. This means that on average, 7 women in Australia died from breast cancer every day in 2006.

Table 3.1: The five most common types of cancer death, females, 2006

Cancer type (ICD-10 codes)	Number of cases	Per cent of all cancer deaths	Per cent of all deaths	Age-standardised rate ^(a)	95% confidence interval
Lung (C33–C34)	2,683	15.7	4.1	22.7	21.8–23.6
Breast (C50)	2,618	15.3	4.0	22.1	21.3–23.0
Unknown primary site (C26, C39, C76–C80)	1,917	11.2	2.9	15.1	14.5–15.8
Bowel (C18–C20)	1,675	9.8	2.6	13.6	12.9–14.2
Pancreas (C25)	1,029	6.0	1.6	8.4	7.9–8.9
All cancers^(b)	17,123	100.0	26.3	141.0	139.7–142.3

(a) Standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001 and expressed per 100,000 females.

(b) Includes cancers coded in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision (ICD-10) as C00–C97, D45, D46, D47.1 and D47.3.

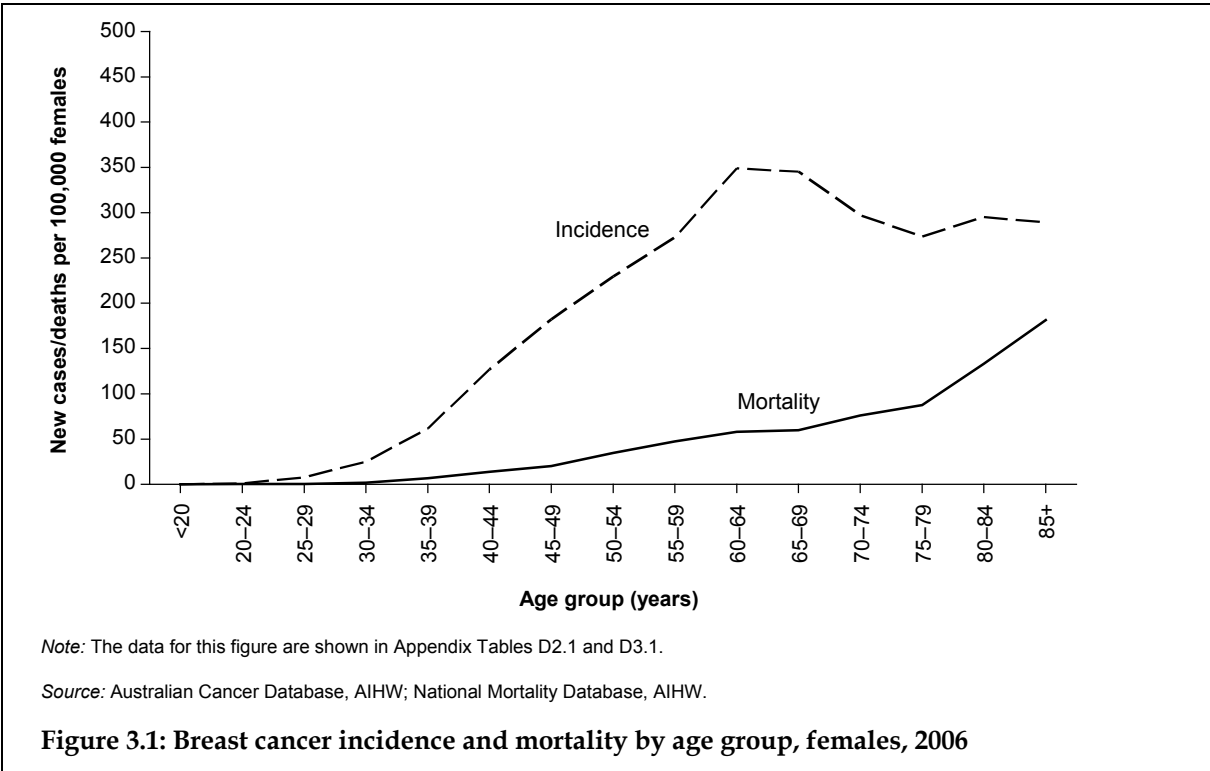
Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death of females in 2006 (2,683 deaths), but the difference between the number of lung cancer and breast cancer deaths among women was small at 65 deaths. When the 2006 age-standardised mortality rates for lung and breast cancers were compared (22.7 and 22.1 deaths per 100,000 women, respectively), the difference was not statistically significant.

Deaths from breast cancer accounted for one in seven (15%) cancer deaths of females in 2006, and one in 25 (4%) deaths from any cause.

Differences by age at death

Differences in the mortality rate according to age at death for 2006 are shown in Figure 3.1. To provide a point of comparison, the incidence rate by age at diagnosis is also indicated. While the incidence rate of breast cancer for women aged 70 years and over was lower than that observed for women in their 60s (as discussed in Chapter 2), this is not the case in regard to the mortality rate. Instead, the mortality rate increased with age, with the sharpest increase observed for women aged 80 years and over. Specifically, in 2006, the mortality rate from breast cancer was 133 (per 100,000 women) for women aged 80 to 84 years and 181 for women aged 85 years and over. This latter rate is more than double the rate observed for women aged 75 to 79 years (88 per 100,000 women) and more than five times the rate for those aged 50 to 54 years (35 per 100,000 women).

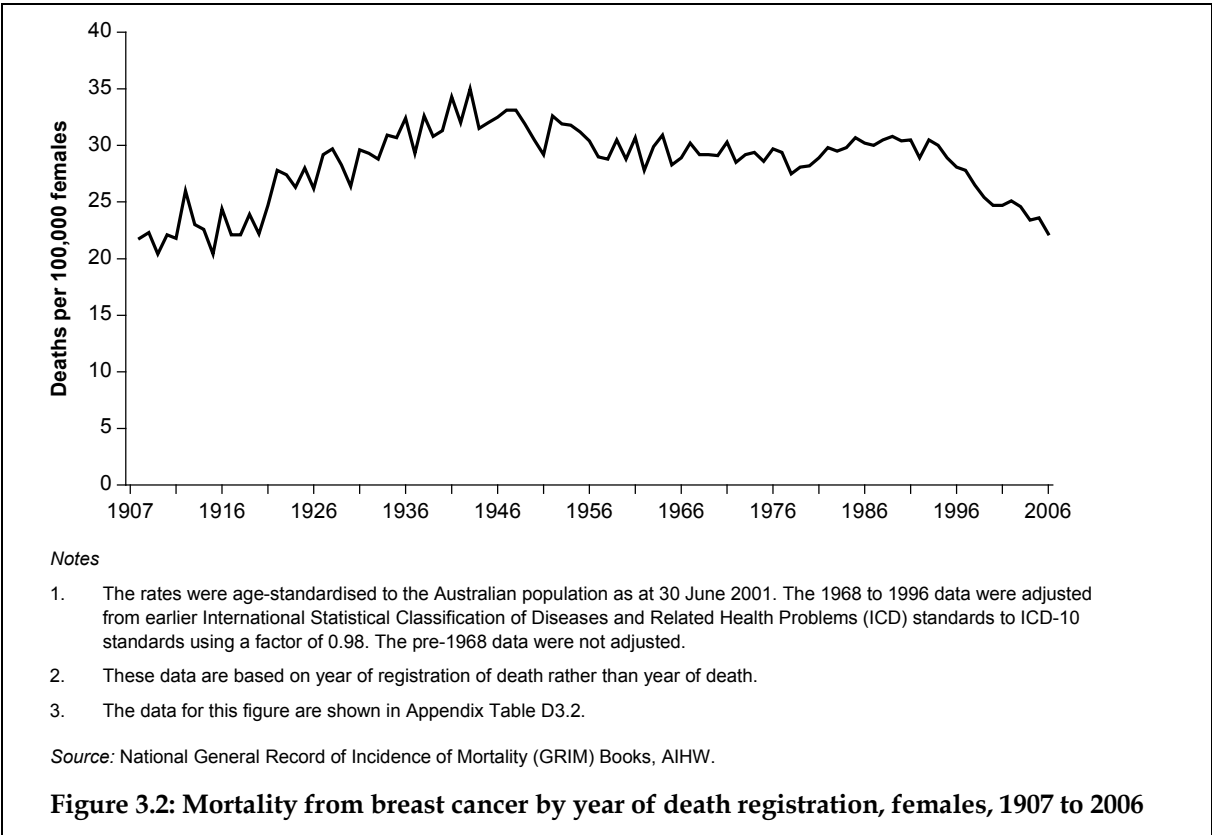


Trends

In Figure 3.2, age-standardised mortality rates for women due to breast cancer are shown for the 100-year period from 1907 to 2006 according to year of registration of death. While mortality data according to year of death are generally shown in this chapter, year of

registration data are shown here because such long-term trend data are not available for breast cancer mortality by year of death. As a result, the data in this figure are slightly different from the mortality data presented elsewhere in this report, but the overall trends are the same.

Numerous year-to-year fluctuations in the rate of death for women due to breast cancer are seen in the data. Nonetheless, the overall pattern indicates that mortality rates from breast cancer for women increased steadily during the first half of the 20th century, after which there was somewhat of a decline in the middle of the century. This was followed by a general levelling of rates until approximately the mid-1990s when the mortality rate began to decline again. By 2006, the rate of death of women from breast cancer was at the same level as that observed for the beginning of the 20th century.

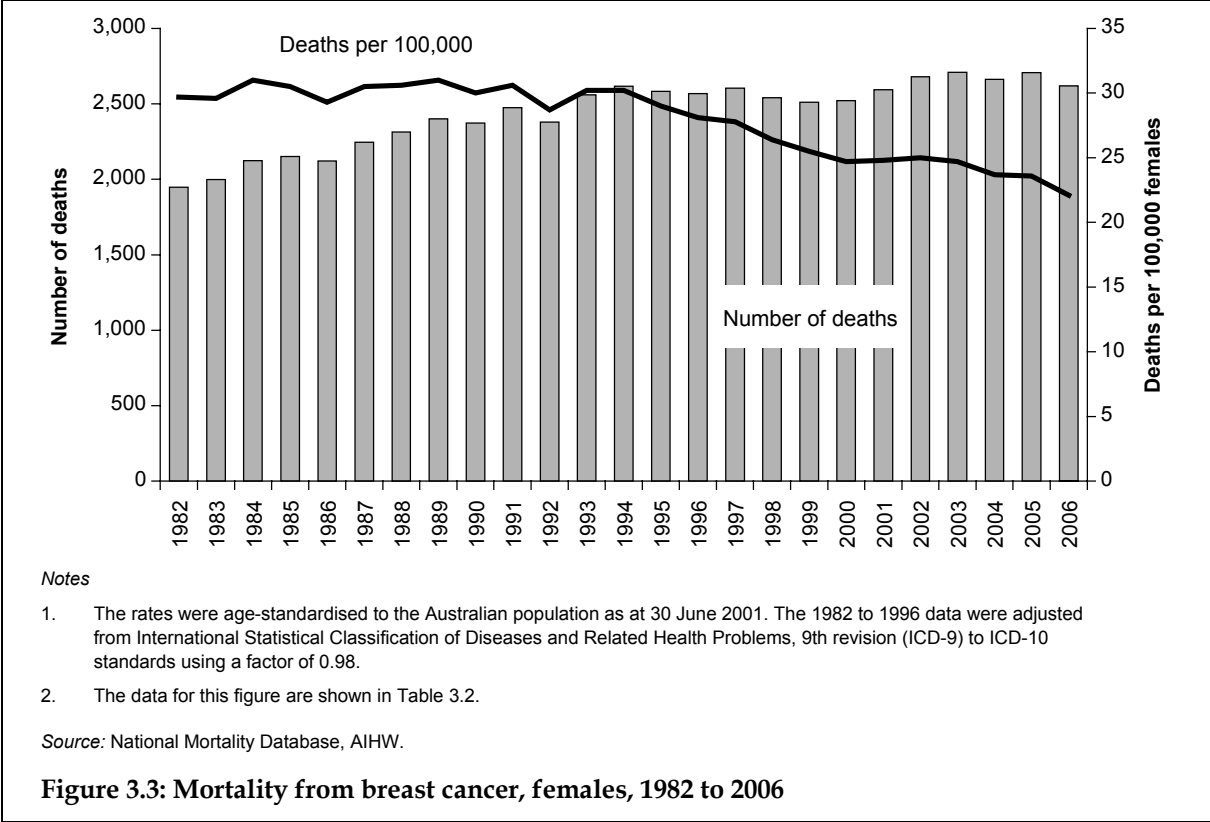


Trends from 1982 to 2006

Information on deaths of women from breast cancer for the 25-year period from 1982 to 2006 is presented in Figure 3.3 and Table 3.2. The number of deaths of women from breast cancer increased between 1982 (1,947 deaths) and 1994 (2,616 deaths). After this time, the number of deaths tended to fall for several years, with 2,512 deaths recorded in 1999, followed by some increase in the number of deaths from breast cancer in the 2000s. However, the number of breast cancer deaths recorded for 2006 (2,618 women) was lower than that recorded for each of the 4 previous years, with the largest number of deaths of women over the 25-year period having occurred in 2003 (2,710) and then 2005 (2,707).

When changes in age structure and population size are taken into account, the trend data indicate that the rate of death of women from breast cancer remained fairly level from 1982 to the early 1990s (at around 29 to 31 deaths per 100,000 women). After this time, there was

an appreciable decline in mortality rates. Specifically, between 1994 (when mortality stood at 30 deaths per 100,000 women) and 2006 (22 per 100,000 women), the mortality rate of women from breast cancer decreased by 27%. The rate recorded for 2006 (22 per 100,000 women) was the lowest recorded since 1982, although it was not statistically significantly lower than the rate observed for the two previous years (24 per 100,000 women in both 2004 and 2005).



This pattern of decrease in age-standardised mortality rates of women from breast cancer in recent decades is also observed in data from a number of other Westernised countries including Canada (CCSSC 2009), New Zealand (NZ Ministry of Health 2009), the United Kingdom (Cancer Research UK 2007) and the USA (ACS 2007). This decline is believed to be due mainly to increased availability and quality of screening mammography (and the related increase in diagnoses at an earlier stage), as well as improved treatment (ACS 2007; CCS & NCIC 2007; Chu et al. 1996; Stewart & Kleihues 2003). However, findings on the relative influence of these two key factors – i.e. screening mammography versus treatment – are inconsistent (e.g. Berry et al. 2005; Ragaz et al. 2005).

The proportion of cancer deaths of females that were due to breast cancer has fallen over the 25-year period from 1982 to 2006, but the proportion of deaths from all causes (not just cancer) that were due to breast cancer did not (Table 3.2). In 1982, deaths from breast cancer accounted for 18% of all *cancer* deaths, but this had fallen to 15% by 2006. In contrast, there was no noticeable trend in the proportion of female deaths from all causes that were due to breast cancer, with this figure approximating 4% for all of the years between 1982 and 2006.

Table 3.2: Mortality from breast cancer, females, 1982 to 2006

Year	Number of deaths	Per cent of all cancer deaths	Per cent of all deaths	Age-standardised rate (A) ^(a)	95% confidence interval	Age-standardised rate (W) ^(b)	95% confidence interval
1982	1,947	18.2	3.8	29.7	28.4–31.1	22.1	21.1–23.1
1983	1,999	17.9	4.0	29.6	28.3–31.0	22.1	21.2–23.2
1984	2,123	18.3	4.1	31.0	29.7–32.3	23.0	22.0–24.1
1985	2,152	18.1	4.0	30.5	29.2–31.9	22.9	21.9–23.9
1986	2,122	17.5	4.0	29.3	28.1–30.6	21.9	21.0–22.9
1987	2,247	18.1	4.2	30.5	29.3–31.8	22.8	21.8–23.7
1988	2,314	18.2	4.3	30.6	29.4–31.9	22.7	21.7–23.6
1989	2,400	18.3	4.1	31.0	29.8–32.3	23.1	22.1–24.0
1990	2,374	18.0	4.3	30.0	28.8–31.3	22.3	21.4–23.3
1991	2,475	18.0	4.5	30.6	29.4–31.9	22.8	21.9–23.8
1992	2,380	17.3	4.2	28.7	27.6–29.9	21.3	20.4–22.2
1993	2,559	17.9	4.6	30.2	29.0–31.4	22.3	21.4–23.3
1994	2,616	18.0	4.4	30.2	29.0–31.3	22.3	21.5–23.2
1995	2,582	17.3	4.4	29.0	27.9–30.1	21.4	20.6–22.3
1996	2,568	16.9	4.3	28.1	27.0–29.2	20.9	20.1–21.8
1997	2,604	17.0	4.2	27.8	26.7–28.9	20.7	19.9–21.6
1998	2,541	16.6	4.2	26.4	25.3–27.4	19.5	18.7–20.3
1999	2,512	16.3	4.1	25.5	24.5–26.5	19.0	18.2–19.8
2000	2,521	16.0	4.1	24.7	23.8–25.7	18.2	17.5–18.9
2001	2,594	16.0	4.2	24.8	23.8–25.8	18.2	17.5–19.0
2002	2,681	16.1	4.2	25.0	24.0–26.0	18.4	17.7–19.1
2003	2,710	16.3	4.2	24.7	23.8–25.6	18.2	17.5–18.9
2004	2,664	15.8	4.2	23.7	22.8–24.7	17.5	16.8–18.2
2005	2,707	15.8	4.2	23.6	22.7–24.5	17.4	16.7–18.1
2006	2,618	15.3	4.0	22.1	21.3–23.0	16.1	15.5–16.8

(a) Standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001 and expressed per 100,000 females. The 1982 to 1996 data were adjusted from International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 9th revision (ICD-9) to ICD-10 standards using a factor of 0.98.

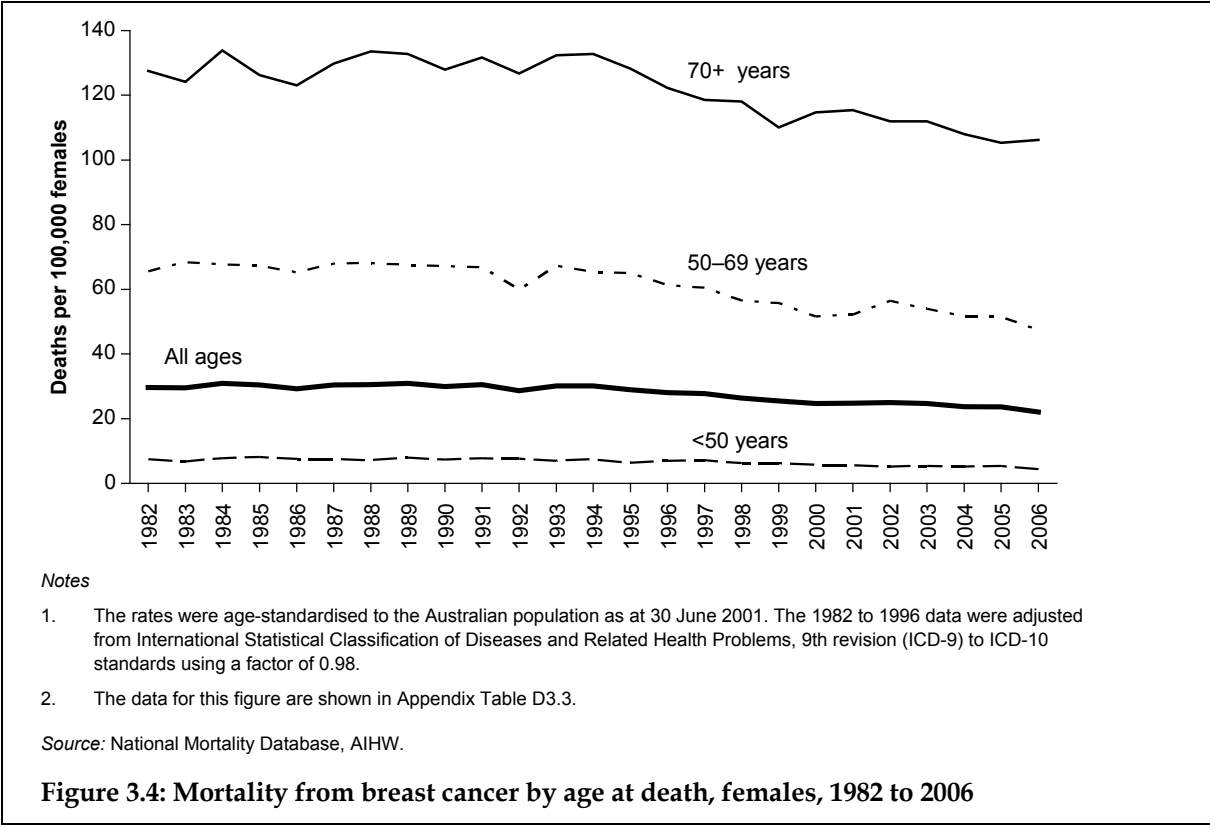
(b) Standardised using the World Health Organization 2000 World Standard Population and expressed per 100,000 females.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Trends by age at death

Although the target group for mammographic screening is women aged 50 to 69 years, the effect of such screening on mortality rates would also be expected to be seen in women aged 70 years and over for two reasons. First, mortality rates generally reflect deaths in women diagnosed with breast cancer several years earlier (Cancer Council Victoria 2002) when some of these women would have been in the target group for screening. Second, although not in the target group, women age 70 years and over are eligible for, and participate in, the screening mammography program (see Chapter 7).

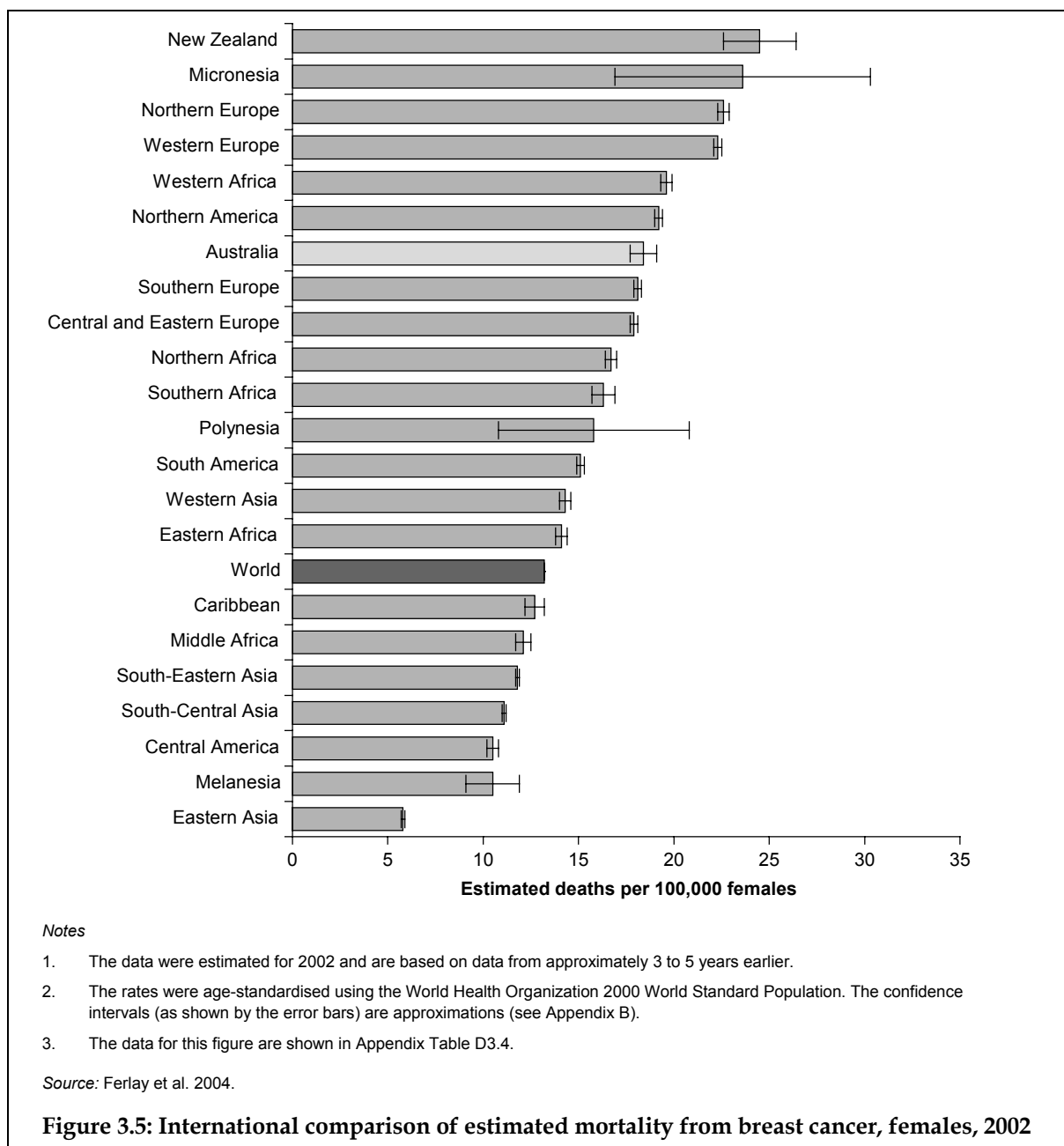
The data in Figure 3.4 show that for women aged 70 years and over, the mortality rate began to decrease in the mid-1990s and continued to do so over the following years, with a decrease of 20% between 1994 and 2006 (133 and 106 deaths per 100,000 women, respectively). For those aged 50 to 69 years, a decrease in mortality rates was also found, with a fall in rates of 30% from 1993 (67 per 100,000 women) to 2006 (48 per 100,000 women). Even though mortality from breast cancer for women aged less than 50 years old was relatively low throughout the period considered, the mortality rate also decreased for this group by 40% from 1994 to 2006 (8 and 5 deaths per 100,000 women, respectively).



International comparisons

As discussed in Chapter 1, caution must be taken when comparing international data on cancer mortality since observed differences may be due to a range of factors, not just differences in the underlying mortality rates. Data on breast cancer deaths for women from the GLOBOCAN database (Ferlay et al. 2004) are shown in Figure 3.5. These rates are estimates for 2002 and are based on data from around 3 to 5 years earlier.

The estimates suggest that the age-standardised mortality rate for women from breast cancer was significantly lower in Australia (18 deaths per 100,000 women) than in New Zealand (25 per 100,000 women), Northern Europe (23 per 100,000 women), Western Europe (22 per 100,000 women) and Western Africa (20 per 100,000 women). Meanwhile, it was estimated to be significantly higher than estimated for women in regions such as South America (15 per 100,000 women) and all of the Asian regions. Differences in mortality rates by country could relate to a number of factors including differences in incidence rates (see Chapter 2), features at diagnosis (e.g. stage at diagnosis, histology type and so forth), and availability and quality of treatment (CCS & NCIC 2008).



Risk of death and average age at death

Based on 2006 data, the risk of a woman in the general population dying from breast cancer before the age of 75 years was 1 in 63; the corresponding risk for the age of 85 was 1 in 38 (Table 3.3). These risk levels are considerably lower than those observed in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, 1982 data indicated that the risk of a woman dying from breast cancer by the age of 75 was 1 in 46 and using 1990 data, the risk was calculated to be 1 in 45.

The average age at which women die from breast cancer has increased over time (Table 3.3). In 1982, the mean age of death of women who died from breast cancer was 64 years. It gradually increased over the following years and, in 2006, it stood at 68 years. Over this same period, the median age also increased from 64 years to 68 years.

Table 3.3: Risk of death and average age at death from breast cancer, females, 1982 to 2006

Year	Risk to age 75 years	Risk to age 85 years	Mean age at death	Median age at death
1982	1 in 46	1 in 30	64.2	64.0
1983	1 in 44	1 in 30	64.4	64.0
1984	1 in 43	1 in 28	64.6	65.0
1985	1 in 44	1 in 28	64.2	65.0
1986	1 in 46	1 in 30	64.5	65.0
1987	1 in 45	1 in 29	64.5	65.0
1988	1 in 45	1 in 28	65.3	66.0
1989	1 in 44	1 in 28	64.8	65.0
1990	1 in 45	1 in 29	65.0	66.0
1991	1 in 44	1 in 28	64.7	66.0
1992	1 in 48	1 in 30	65.0	66.0
1993	1 in 46	1 in 28	65.6	66.0
1994	1 in 46	1 in 28	65.3	66.0
1995	1 in 47	1 in 29	65.9	67.0
1996	1 in 49	1 in 30	65.3	66.0
1997	1 in 49	1 in 31	65.0	66.0
1998	1 in 53	1 in 33	65.9	66.0
1999	1 in 53	1 in 34	65.4	65.0
2000	1 in 56	1 in 35	66.3	67.0
2001	1 in 55	1 in 34	66.4	67.0
2002	1 in 56	1 in 34	66.6	67.0
2003	1 in 56	1 in 35	66.7	67.0
2004	1 in 57	1 in 35	66.9	67.0
2005	1 in 59	1 in 36	66.6	66.0
2006	1 in 63	1 in 38	67.7	68.0

Note: The 1982 to 1996 data were adjusted from International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 9th revision (ICD-9) to ICD-10 standards using a factor of 0.98.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Differences across groups

In this section of the report, differences in mortality of women from breast cancer according to geographical area, socioeconomic status, Indigenous status and country of birth are presented. As with international differences in mortality rates (discussed previously), the observed differences according to these characteristics may be due to a number of reasons, including differences in incidence rates of breast cancer, stage at diagnosis, and access to and quality of treatment.

Differences by geographical area

During 2002 to 2006, the average number of deaths of women from breast cancer per year ranged from 914 in New South Wales to 11 in the Northern Territory (Table 3.4). The age-standardised rates indicate that the Northern Territory had the lowest mortality rate from breast cancer for females (19 deaths per 100,000 females) although this rate does not differ significantly from that of the other states and territories. The highest mortality rate from breast cancer for females was observed for South Australia, with 26 deaths from breast cancer per 100,000 women. This rate was significantly higher than the rate observed for Western Australia (23 per 100,000 women) and Queensland (22 per 100,000 women).

Table 3.4: Mortality from breast cancer by state and territory, females, 2002–2006

State or territory	Average annual number of cases ^(a)	Age-standardised rate ^(b)	95% confidence interval
New South Wales	914	23.9	23.2–24.6
Victoria	703	24.7	23.8–25.5
Queensland	460	22.3	21.4–23.2
Western Australia	232	22.5	21.2–23.8
South Australia	251	25.7	24.3–27.2
Tasmania	72	24.6	22.0–27.3
Australian Capital Territory	35	22.9	19.6–26.7
Northern Territory	11	19.1	13.7–25.7
Total	2,676	23.8	23.4–24.2

(a) Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding.

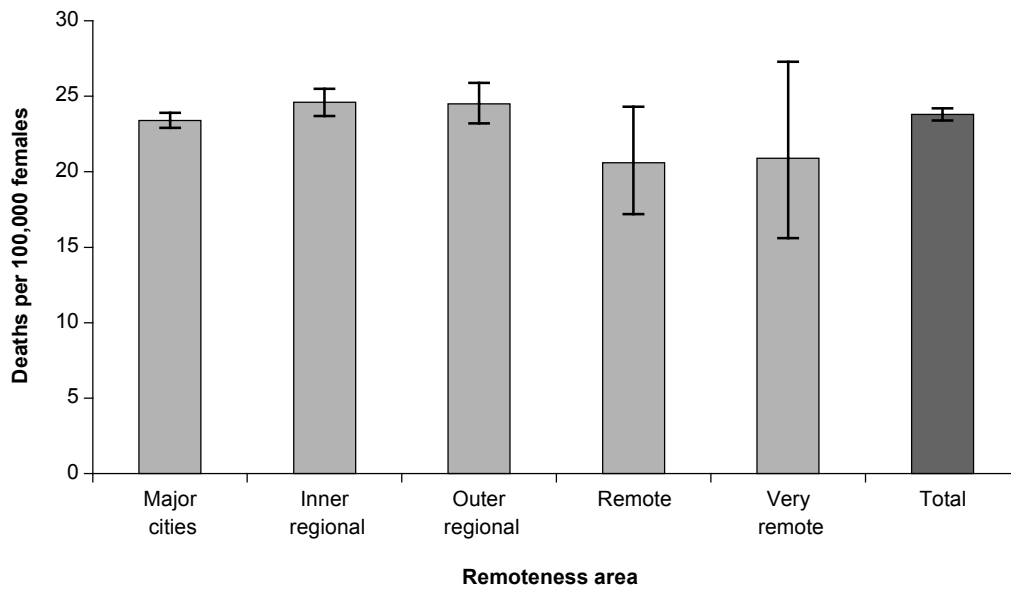
(b) Standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001 and expressed per 100,000 females.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Mortality rates due to breast cancer for the 2002 to 2006 period are presented in Figure 3.6 according to remoteness of usual residence of the women at time of death. While the mortality rates for women who lived in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas were lower than those for other women, the differences were not statistically significant. The same conclusion was reached in the previous edition of this report (AIHW & NBCC 2006).

Differences by socioeconomic status

As discussed in Chapter 2, the socioeconomic status measure used in this report pertains to the area in which the women lived. In the 2002 to 2006 period, women living in areas with the highest socioeconomic status had a significantly higher rate of mortality from breast cancer (27 deaths per 100,000 females) compared with women living in other areas (Figure 3.7). This contrasts with the finding in the previous edition of this report for 2000 to 2002 when no statistically significant differences by socioeconomic status were found (AIHW & NBCC 2006).

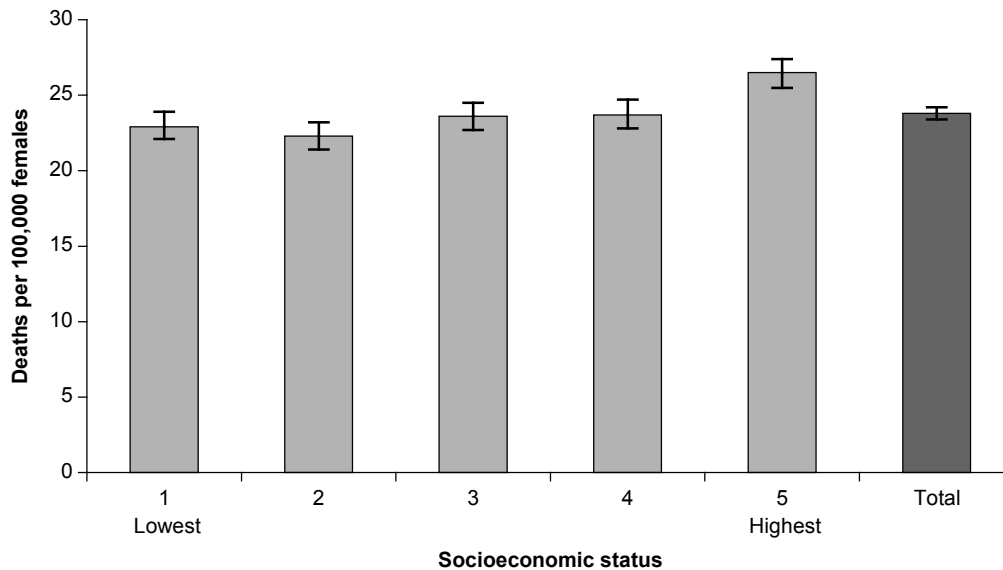


Notes

1. Remoteness area was measured using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Area classification.
2. The rates were age-standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001.
3. The data for this figure are shown in Appendix Table D3.5.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Figure 3.6: Mortality from breast cancer by remoteness area, females, 2002-2006



Notes

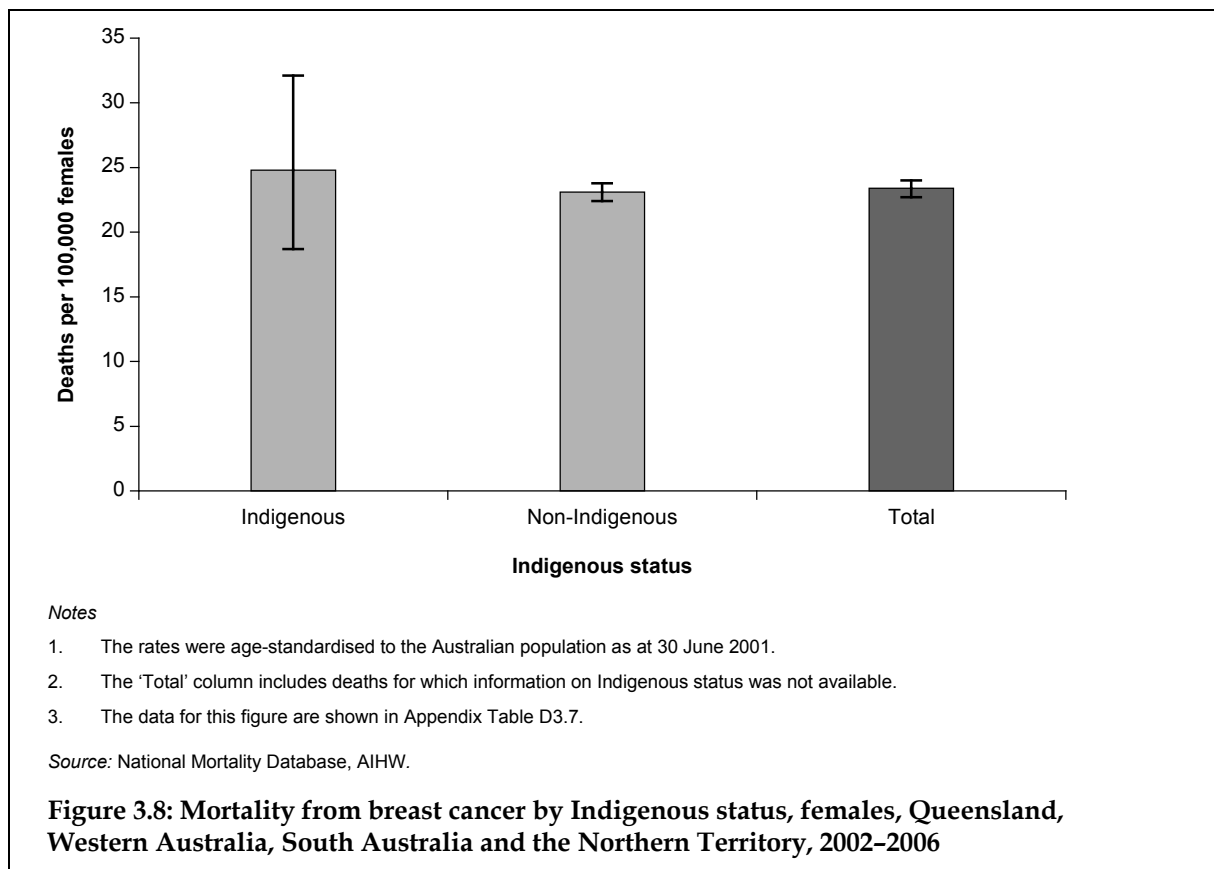
1. Socioeconomic status was measured using the ABS Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage.
2. The rates were age-standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001.
3. The data for this figure are shown in Appendix Table D3.6.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

Figure 3.7: Mortality from breast cancer by socioeconomic status, females, 2002-2006

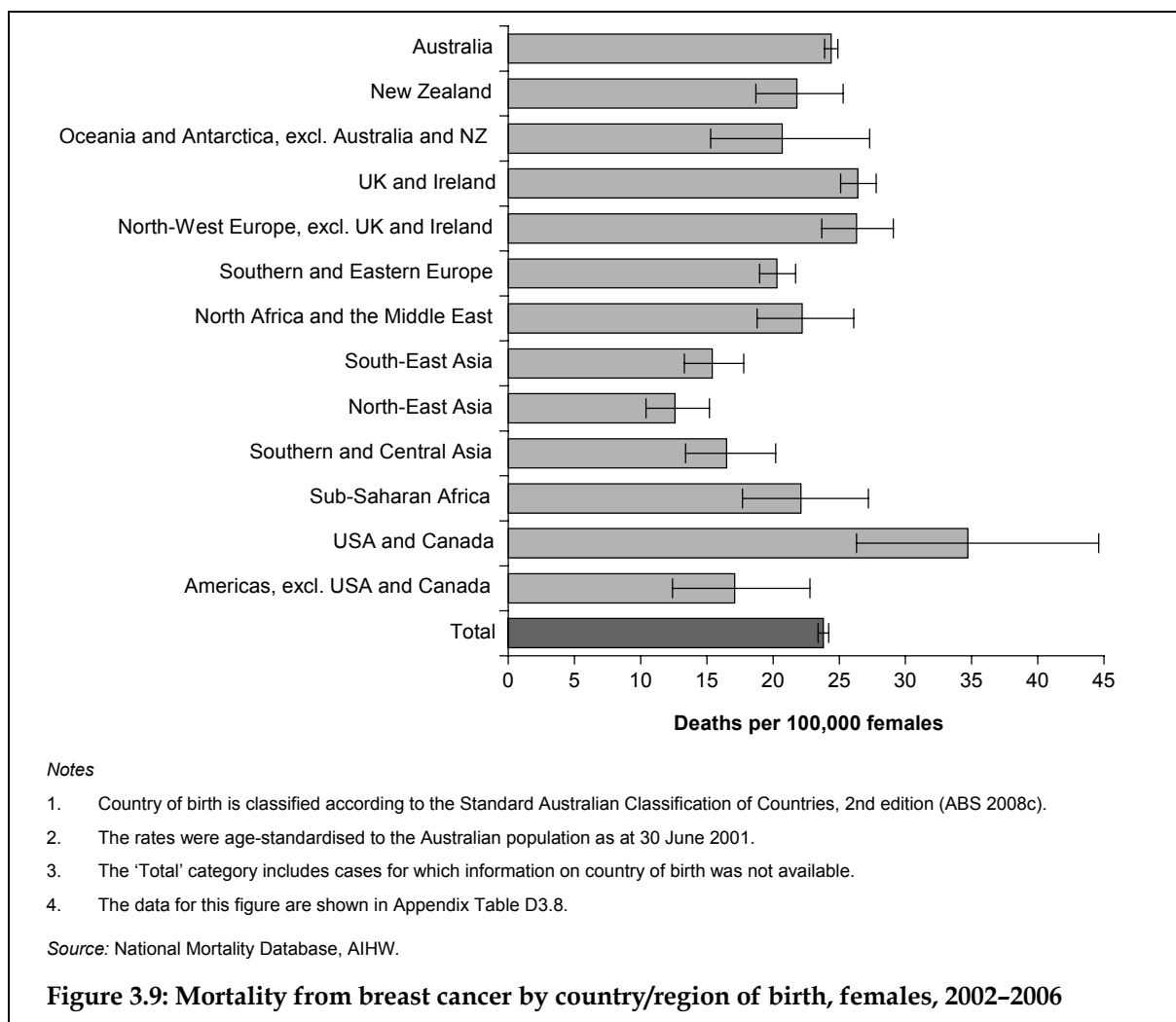
Differences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

Information on Indigenous status is considered to be of sufficient quality for use in the National Mortality Database for Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. During 2002 to 2006, an average of 15 Indigenous women in these four jurisdictions died from breast cancer each year (Appendix Table D3.7). Despite having significantly lower incidence rates (as discussed in Chapter 2), Figure 3.8 illustrates that breast cancer mortality rates for Indigenous women in the four jurisdictions were not significantly different from those of their non-Indigenous counterparts (25 and 23 deaths per 100,000 women, respectively). This is consistent with findings from the first edition of this report which used data from the same four jurisdictions for 2000 to 2004 (AIHW & NBCC 2006).



Differences by country of birth

As shown in Figure 3.9, in the 2002 to 2006 period, women living in Australia who were born in the USA and Canada (35 deaths per 100,000 females) and those born in the UK and Ireland (26 per 100,000 females) had significantly higher age-standardised mortality rates than women born in Australia (24 per 100,000 females). In contrast, the lowest mortality rates were observed for women born in North-East Asia (13 deaths per 100,000 females) and South-East Asia (15 per 100,000 females); these rates were significantly lower than the rate observed for Australian-born women.



Breast cancer as an associated cause of death

The data presented thus far in this chapter apply to deaths of women for which the underlying cause of death was breast cancer. In addition to an underlying cause of death, associated causes of death can be listed on a death certificate. An associated cause of death is any other condition or event that was not the underlying cause of death, but was considered to contribute to the individual's death. In this section, data are presented on deaths of women for which breast cancer was the associated (but not underlying) cause of death.

On average during 2002 to 2006, 673 of the women who died each year in Australia had breast cancer recorded as an associated cause of death (Table 3.5). For almost half these deaths (46%), the underlying cause was circulatory system disease (average of 307 women per year) – in particular, ischaemic heart disease (143 women per year) and cerebrovascular disease (90 women). For approximately one in five (19%) deaths, a cancer other than breast cancer was recorded as the underlying cause of death (130 women).

Differences by age at death, according to the underlying cause of death in which breast cancer was an associated cause, are also shown in Table 3.5. On average, the majority of women (85%) who died each year during 2002 to 2006 with breast cancer as an associated cause were aged 70 years and over. For half these women (50%), circulatory system disease

Table 3.5: Underlying cause of death where breast cancer was an associated cause by age group, females, annual average for 2002–2006

Underlying cause of death	ICD-10 ^(a) codes	<50 years		50–69 years		70+ years		All ages	
		Number of deaths ^(b)	% of deaths	Number of deaths ^(b)	% of deaths	Number of deaths ^(b)	% of deaths	Number of deaths ^(b)	% of deaths
Circulatory system disease	I00–I99	2	18.8	18	20.5	287	50.1	307	45.7
Cancer (other than breast cancer)	C00–C97, D45–D46, D47.1, D47.3	3	35.4	38	42.2	89	15.6	130	19.4
Respiratory system disease	J00–J99	1	8.3	9	9.6	41	7.2	50	7.5
Nervous system disease	G00–G99	1	6.3	5	5.4	29	5.1	35	5.2
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disease	E00–E89	0	4.2	5	5.1	27	4.7	32	4.8
Digestive system disease	K00–K93	1	14.6	6	6.7	23	4.0	31	4.5
Mental and behavioural disorder	F00–F99	0	0.0	0	0.2	22	3.9	23	3.4
Other	all other codes	1	12.5	9	10.3	54	9.5	65	9.6
Total		10	100.0	90	100.0	573	100.0	673	100.0

(a) International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision.

(b) Equals the average annual number of deaths. Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

was the underlying cause of death (287 deaths per year). In comparison, for women in the two other age groups, a cancer other than breast cancer was the most common underlying cause of death (35% of deaths of those aged less than 50 years and 42% of deaths of those aged 50 to 69 years).

Mortality of males from breast cancer

While the number of men who die from breast cancer is much lower than the number of women who die from this disease, each year some men die from breast cancer. In 2006, 25 men died from invasive breast cancer (Table 3.6). Since 1982, the number of men who died from breast cancer has ranged from 10 in 2003 to 26 in 2001.

Table 3.6: Mortality from breast cancer, males, 1982 to 2006

Year	Number of deaths	% of all cancer deaths	ASR ^(a)	95% confidence interval	Mean age at death	Median age at death
1982	17	0.12	0.4	0.2–0.6	70.6	71.0
1983	13	0.09	0.3	0.1–0.5	72.4	71.0
1984	17	0.11	0.4	0.2–0.6	70.2	69.0
1985	11	0.07	0.2	0.1–0.3	68.9	71.0
1986	17	0.11	0.3	0.2–0.5	66.5	65.0
1987	20	0.12	0.3	0.2–0.5	64.8	64.5
1988	23	0.13	0.4	0.2–0.6	71.6	70.0
1989	18	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.5	68.4	70.0
1990	16	0.09	0.3	0.1–0.4	71.4	69.5
1991	15	0.08	0.2	0.1–0.4	70.1	70.0
1992	19	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.5	71.6	70.0
1993	15	0.08	0.2	0.1–0.4	74.0	74.0
1994	20	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.4	70.7	70.0
1995	23	0.12	0.3	0.2–0.5	67.1	67.0
1996	21	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.4	68.8	68.0
1997	19	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.4	75.3	77.0
1998	19	0.09	0.2	0.1–0.4	70.3	71.0
1999	21	0.10	0.2	0.1–0.4	62.7	66.0
2000	21	0.10	0.3	0.2–0.4	66.3	69.0
2001	26	0.12	0.3	0.2–0.4	70.1	72.5
2002	17	0.08	0.2	0.1–0.3	66.2	66.0
2003	10	0.05	0.1	0.1–0.2	67.3	72.5
2004	19	0.09	0.2	0.1–0.3	71.3	77.0
2005	19	0.09	0.2	0.1–0.3	69.9	71.0
2006	25	0.11	0.3	0.2–0.4	71.8	76.0

(a) Standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001 and expressed per 100,000 males. The 1982 to 1996 data were adjusted from International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 9th revision (ICD-9) to ICD-10 standards using a factor of 0.98.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.

In each of the years from 1982 to 2006, of all men who died from cancer, approximately 0.1% – that is, one in a thousand – died from breast cancer (Table 3.6). The age-standardised mortality rates for men from breast cancer have also remained relatively constant since 1982, ranging from 0.1 to 0.4 (per 100,000 males). In 2006, the mortality rate was 0.3 (per 100,000 males).

Over the years from 1982 to 2006, the mean age of death of men who died from breast cancer ranged from 63 years (in 1999) to 75 years (1997). In 2006, the mean age at death was 72 years and the median age was 76 years. Given the relatively small number of deaths of males from breast cancer each year, this year-to-year fluctuation in average age at death is not surprising.

As shown in Table 3.7, on average during 2002 to 2006, 10 out of 18 men who died from breast cancer were aged 70 years or over. The rate of death from breast cancer for those aged 70 to 79 years (1 per 100,000 males) and for those aged 80 years and over (2 per 100,000 males) was significantly higher than the rate for men in the other age groups.

Table 3.7: Mortality from breast cancer by age group, males, 2002–2006

Age group (years)	Average annual number of deaths ^(a)	Age-specific rate ^(b)	95% confidence interval
<50	1	<0.1	0.0–0.0
50–69	7	0.3	0.2–0.4
70–79	5	1.0	0.6–1.4
80+	5	2.0	1.3–3.0
Total^(c)	18	0.2	0.1–0.2

(a) Numbers may not sum to the total due to rounding.

(b) Number of deaths per 100,000 males.

(c) The rate shown in this row is age-standardised to the Australian population as at 30 June 2001; it is expressed per 100,000 males.

Source: National Mortality Database, AIHW.