

5 Cancer of the colon

Summary

In 1992–1997 relative survival one year after diagnosis was 77.6% for males and 76.0% for females. Five-year relative survival proportions were 58.3% and 58.7% for males and females, respectively (Table 5.1). Survival ten years after diagnosis was 51.0% for males and 52.0% for females in 1987–1991, the most recent period for which ten-year relative survival data are available (Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

Relative survival after diagnosis of colon cancer increased significantly between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997 diagnostic periods. Increases in relative survival have been statistically significant for all relative survival times (including one-, five- and ten- year relative survival) for males and females. Five-year relative survival increased by 8.1 percentage points for males and 7.4 percentage points for females between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997 (Figure 5.2; Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

Five-year relative survival proportions for the period 1992–1997 were highest for the younger age groups. Colon cancer five-year relative survival was 63.2% for males and 68.7% for females aged 20–29 years, and decreased steadily with age, declining to 51.5% and 54.6% for males and females aged 80–89 respectively. There was a further decline in the 90–99 age group to 33.3% for males and 37.1% for females (Figure 5.3; Table 5.1).

For individual age groups, five-year relative survival after diagnosis of colon cancer significantly increased between 1982–1986 and 1992–1997 for males aged between 40–49 and 70–79 years and for females aged between 50–59 and 80–89 years (Figure 5.3; Tables 5.5 and 5.6).

Table 5.1: Cancer of the colon: 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	11	14	2	2	82.2	85.9
20–29 years	55	62	21	19	63.2	68.7
30–39 years	249	272	92	92	63.8	68.1
40–49 years	1,115	1,045	430	409	60.9	59.5
50–59 years	3,116	2,652	1,263	1,038	61.1	61.4
60–69 years	6,218	4,708	2,871	1,980	59.4	60.7
70–79 years	6,551	6,171	3,697	3,126	56.8	57.4
80–89 years	2,828	4,005	2,030	2,666	51.5	54.6
90–99 years	245	645	216	558	33.3	37.1
All ages	20,388	19,574	10,622	9,890	58.3	58.7

Incidence and mortality

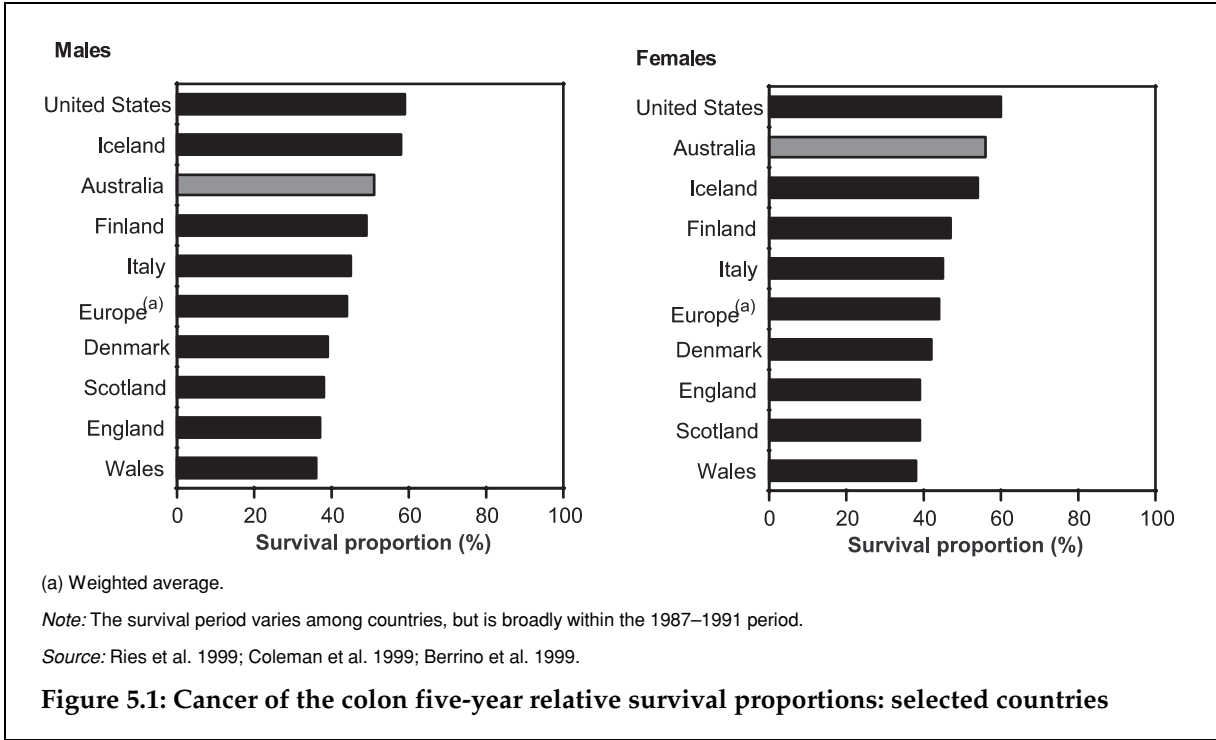
In 1997, there were 7,210 new cases of colon cancer diagnosed in Australia. Of these, 3,694 were male and 3,516 were female.

Colon cancer was the cause of 1,869 male and 1,662 female deaths in 1997. It is estimated that each year colon cancer is responsible for about 13,300 years of life lost in males, and 10,000 years of life lost in females before the age of 75.

For the six-year period 1992–1997, age-standardised rates for cancer of the colon in males increased by 0.3% per annum for incidence and deaths declined by 0.1% per annum. For females, age-standardised rates decreased for both incidence and deaths by 0.1% and 0.2% per annum respectively.

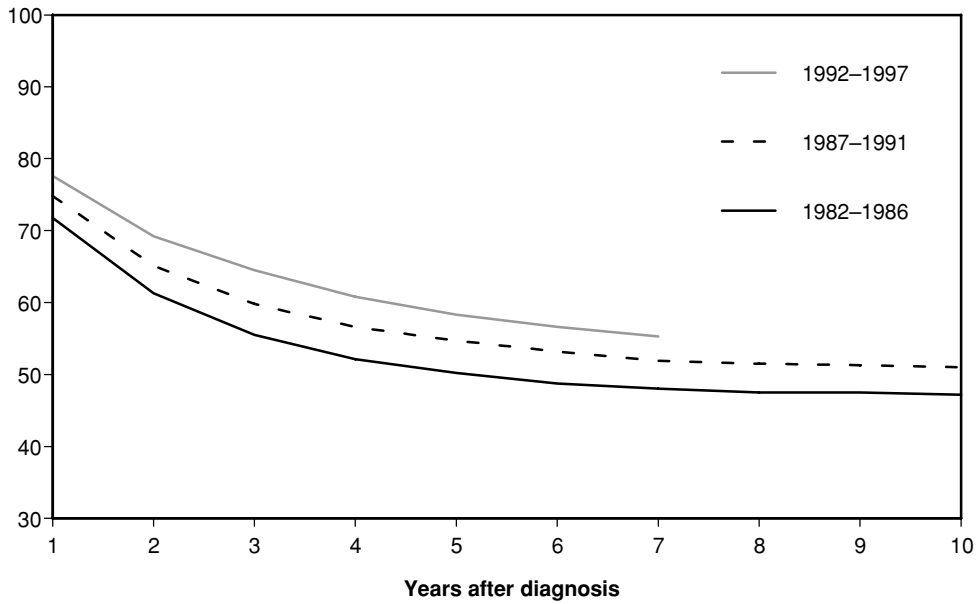
International comparisons

Five-year relative survival after a diagnosis of cancer of the colon compares favourably with that in other Western countries for which relative survival data are available. Australian cancer of the colon five-year relative survival ranked third behind the United States for males and second behind the United States for females, 5 percentage points lower.



Males

Relative survival (%)



Females

Relative survival (%)

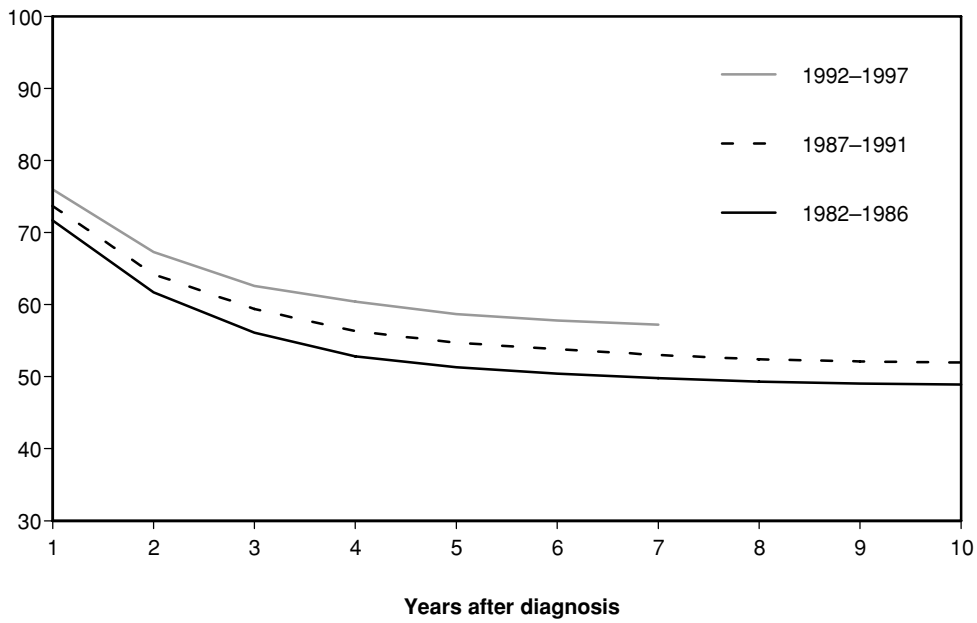
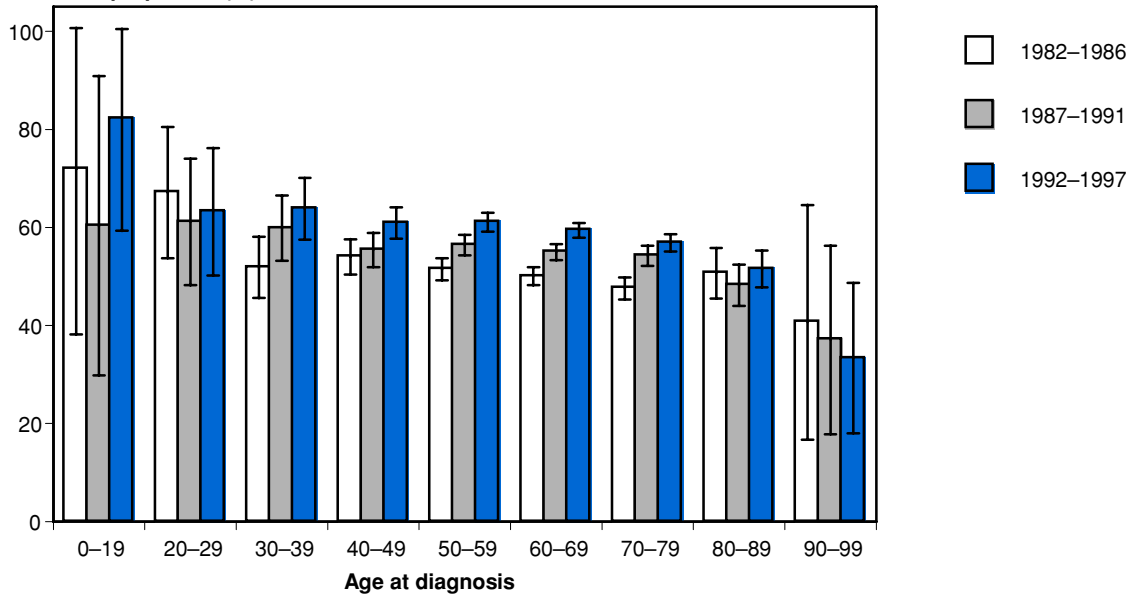


Figure 5.2: Cancer of the colon relative survival proportions: period of diagnosis, Australia

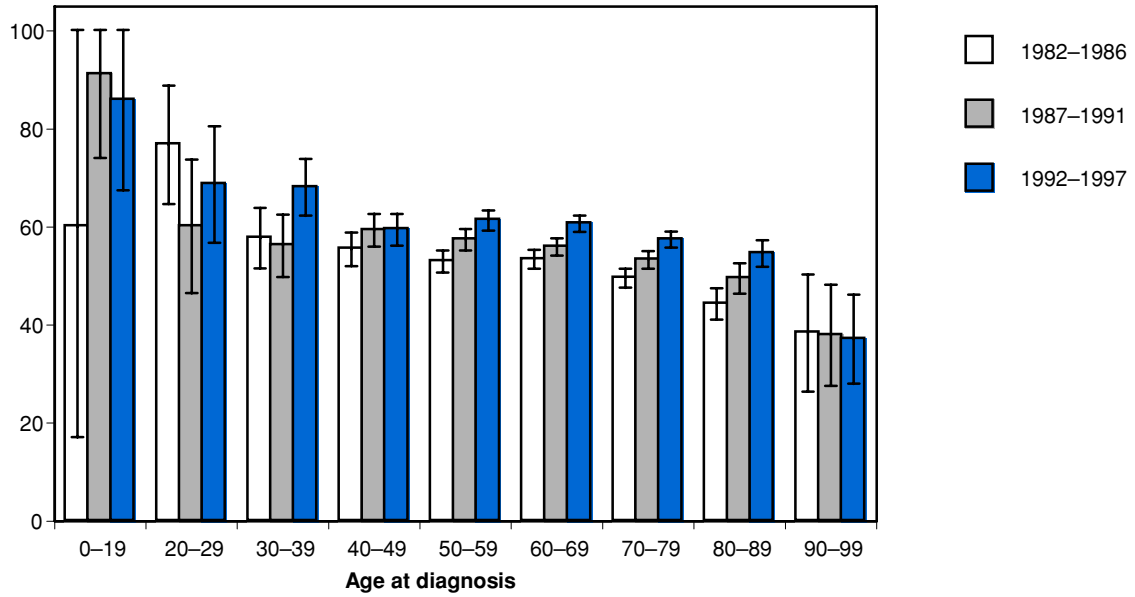
Males

Survival proportion (%)



Females

Survival proportion (%)



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

Figure 5.3: Cancer of the colon five-year relative survival proportions: age at diagnosis by period of diagnosis, Australia