

Breast cancer survival in Australian women 1982–1994

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is an independent health and welfare statistics and information agency. The Institute's mission is to inform community discussion and decision making through national leadership in the development and provision of authoritative and timely information on the health and welfare of Australians.

The Australasian Association of Cancer Registries (AACR) is a collaborative body representing State and Territory cancer registries in Australia and New Zealand. Most are members of the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR). The AACR was formed in November 1982, with the backing of the IACR, to provide a formal mechanism for promoting uniformity of collection, classification and collation of cancer data.

The purposes of the AACR are:

- to provide a continuing framework for the development of population-based cancer registration in Australia and New Zealand;
- to facilitate exchange of scientific and technical information between cancer registries and to promote standardisation in the collection and classification of cancer data;
- to facilitate cancer research both nationally and internationally; and
- to facilitate the dissemination of cancer information.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has joined with the AACR to produce national cancer statistics through the establishment of the National Cancer Statistics Clearing House.

The National Breast Cancer Centre (NBCC) works in partnership with women, health professionals, cancer organisations, researchers and governments to improve breast cancer outcomes for women. It was established to improve breast cancer control by:

- analysing research and making it readily available to women and health professionals;
- developing, disseminating and encouraging the adoption of clinical guidelines to improve the diagnosis, treatment and support of women with breast cancer; providing accurate and accessible information to well women, women with breast cancer, primary care providers and breast cancer specialists; and developing a national monitoring system to provide information about all aspects of breast cancer.

Goals of the Centre

- Ensuring that all women and health professionals have a balanced understanding of the incidence of and risk factors for breast cancer;
- Ensuring that all women with breast cancer are diagnosed as early as possible;
- Ensuring that all women diagnosed with breast cancer receive 'state of the art' treatment;
- Ensuring that all women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families receive adequate psychosocial, physical and practical support;
- Developing networks and infrastructure to increase breast cancer control; and
- Developing a national monitoring system for breast cancer outcomes.

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair
Professor Janice Reid

Director
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Ms Anne-Marie Waters
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
GPO Box 570
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6244 1127

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Summary

- Breast cancer is an important disease in the female population of Australia, with 1 in 11 women expected to be diagnosed with it before the age of 75.
- In 1996, 9,556 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed in Australia.
- In 1996, there were 2,623 deaths attributed to breast cancer.
- Relative survival in this report is calculated as the ratio of survival in women diagnosed with breast cancer to survival of women with similar characteristics such as age.
- An analysis of relative survival patterns for women diagnosed with breast cancer in the period 1982–1994 showed that the relative survival proportion was 90.9% 2 years after diagnosis, 76.8% 5 years after and 63.1% 10 years after.
- The relative survival proportions increased over time, with those diagnosed in the 1990s showing better relative survival proportions than those diagnosed in the 1980s.
- Women diagnosed with breast cancer while aged in their 40s had a better relative survival proportion than any other age group, while those aged in their 80s and 90s showed the worst relative survival proportions.
- Relative survival proportions in each of the States were similar (within 4%). Survival proportions for the Australian Capital Territory (higher) and the Northern Territory (lower) showed more substantial variation from the national average. This difference probably reflects the small and unusual populations of the two Territories.
- There was very little difference in the 2- or 5-year relative survival proportions for urban and rural areas and both areas showed improved relative survival proportions over time.
- Breast cancer relative survival proportions in Australia for women diagnosed in the 1980s are lower than those for white women in the United States but are comparable with those for women in the Scandinavian countries. Other European countries such as England, Spain and Scotland all show lower survival proportions than those in Australia.

Contributors

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Australian Capital Territory – Dr Bruce Shadbolt

Northern Territory – Dr John Condon, Ms Mary-Anne Measey

