

Older people living with cancer

Number of older people living with cancer set to treble by 2040

More than three times as many older people (aged 65 and over) will be living with cancer by 2040 – 1.3 million in 2010 to 4.1 million in 2040.¹

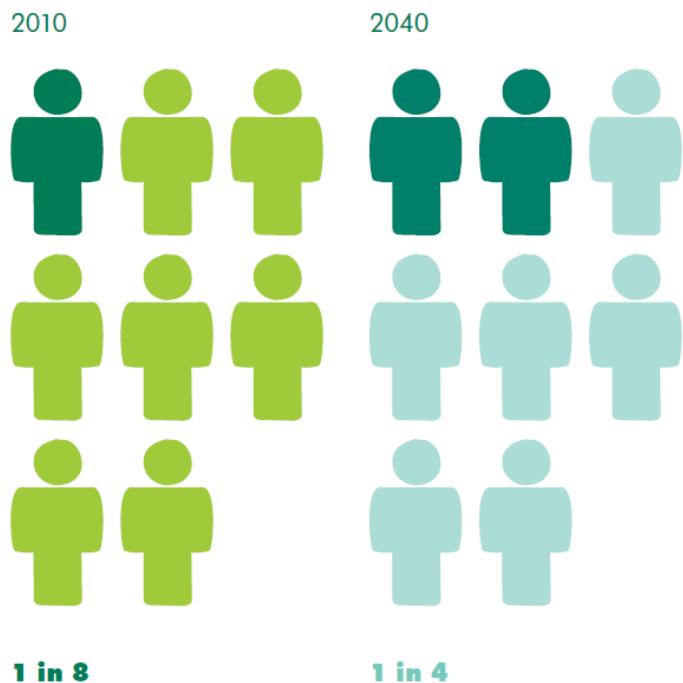
By 2040 older people will account for 77% of all people living with a cancer diagnosis, an increase from 63% in 2010.

This increase is highest for older people (3.1 times higher) compared to people aged 45-64 (1.7 times higher) or 0-44 (1.3 times higher).

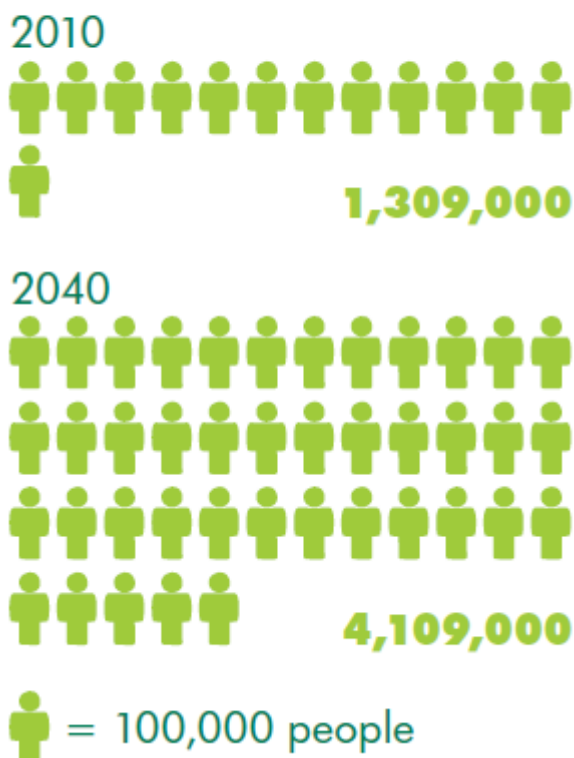
This is mainly driven by increases in the number of people living with breast and prostate cancer in this age group.

Almost twice as many older people will have had a cancer diagnosis by 2040.

Proportion of older people (65 and over) living with a cancer diagnosis in the UK



Number of older people (65 and over) living with a cancer diagnosis in the UK



Nearly 1 in 4 (23 per cent) older people will have had a cancer diagnosis in 2040 – almost double (13 per cent) the proportion in 2010.

This increase is highest for older people compared to other age groups. By 2040:

- 1 in 17 (6 per cent) people aged 45-64 will have had a diagnosis, compared to 1 in 26 people (4 per cent) in 2010.
- 1 in 181 (0.6 per cent) people aged 0-44 will have had a diagnosis, compared to nearly 1 in 221 (0.5 per cent) in 2010.



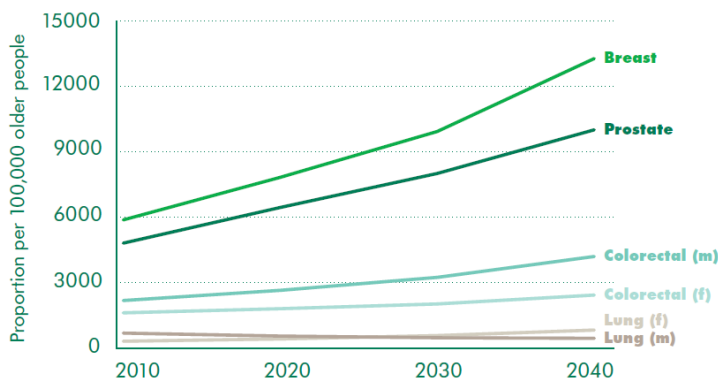
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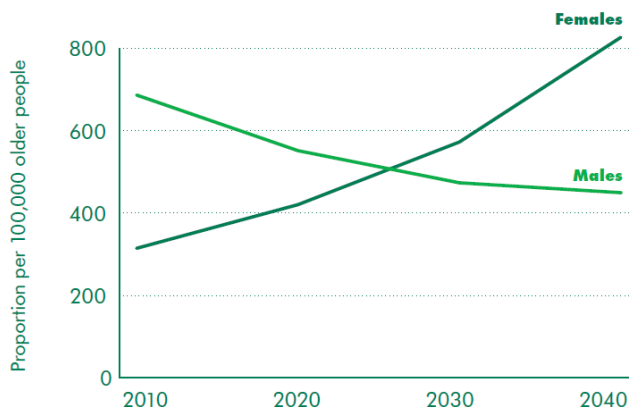
Proportion of older women with lung cancer set to more than double by 2040

The biggest increase in the proportion of older people with a cancer diagnosis will be for older women with lung cancer (proportions are predicted to increase from 319 per 100,000 in 2010 to 831 per 100,000 in 2040). The number of older women with lung cancer is predicted to increase four-fold – to 76,400 in 2040 from 18,300 in 2010. In contrast for older males the proportion living with lung cancer is predicted to fall with a modest increase in projected numbers.

Proportion of older people (65 and over) living with a cancer diagnosis by cancer type in the UK



Proportion of older people (65 and over) living with a lung cancer diagnosis in the UK



Due to its low survival, the proportion of older people with lung cancer is still lower than other cancers studied despite the increase for women. The largest proportions and numbers are seen for women with breast cancer and men with prostate cancer with proportions doubling over the thirty years to 2040 and the numbers living with breast and prostate cancer over three times higher in 2040.

The research

This new study published in the British Journal of Cancer makes, for the first time ever, long-term projections of the number of people living with a cancer diagnosis in the UK – cancer prevalence. Researchers, from Thames Cancer Registry in King's College London and University College London, used cancer registry data to estimate cancer prevalence in 2009 and developed a model to predict prevalence based on projected cancer incidence, survival and population demographics. A number of possible scenarios were considered and are presented in full in the British Journal of Cancer. Scenario one, which assumes existing trends in incidence and survival will continue (except for prostate cancer), is presented here and is considered the most empirically based scenario.

Projections of cancer prevalence can be used to better understand the future burden of cancer and subsequent health and social care resources required to support this.

Why is cancer prevalence increasing?

Cancer incidence rates are highest in older people with over 60 per cent of new cases diagnosed each year in the UK in people aged 65 and over.² The population of the UK is growing and ageing. With high cancer incidence rates for older people, increasing incidence rates (with the exception of male lung cancer) and better cancer survival, thanks to advances in cancer treatment as well as a greater focus on earlier diagnosis, cancer prevalence is set to continue to rise.

References and notes

For more information on the issues older people experience during treatment, please see Macmillan Cancer Support's recent report, [The Age Old Excuse: the under treatment of older cancer patients](#). For more facts and figures read, [The Rich picture on: Older people with cancer](#).

1. Maddams J, Utey M and Møller H. 2012. Projections of cancer prevalence in the United Kingdom, 2010–2040. *British Journal of Cancer* advance online publication 14 August 2012; doi: 10.1038/bjc.2012.366 <http://www.nature.com/bjc/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/bjc2012366a.html>. Projections scenario 1 presented here.

2. Cancer Research UK. Cancer incidence by age - UK statistics. <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/incidence/age/> (accessed June 2012)