



Cancer incidence in Scotland

To December 2024

An Accredited official statistics release for Scotland

Publication date: 18 August 2026

About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an annual update of cancer incidence and prevalence statistics in Scotland to 31 December 2024. All cancer types are included. For the first time, this report includes data for cancers of unknown primary (CUP). CUP is a diagnosis made when tumour cells are found in the body, but the original site where the cancer began cannot be identified. Generally, cancer incidence statistics should be interpreted in the context of long-term trends.

Main points

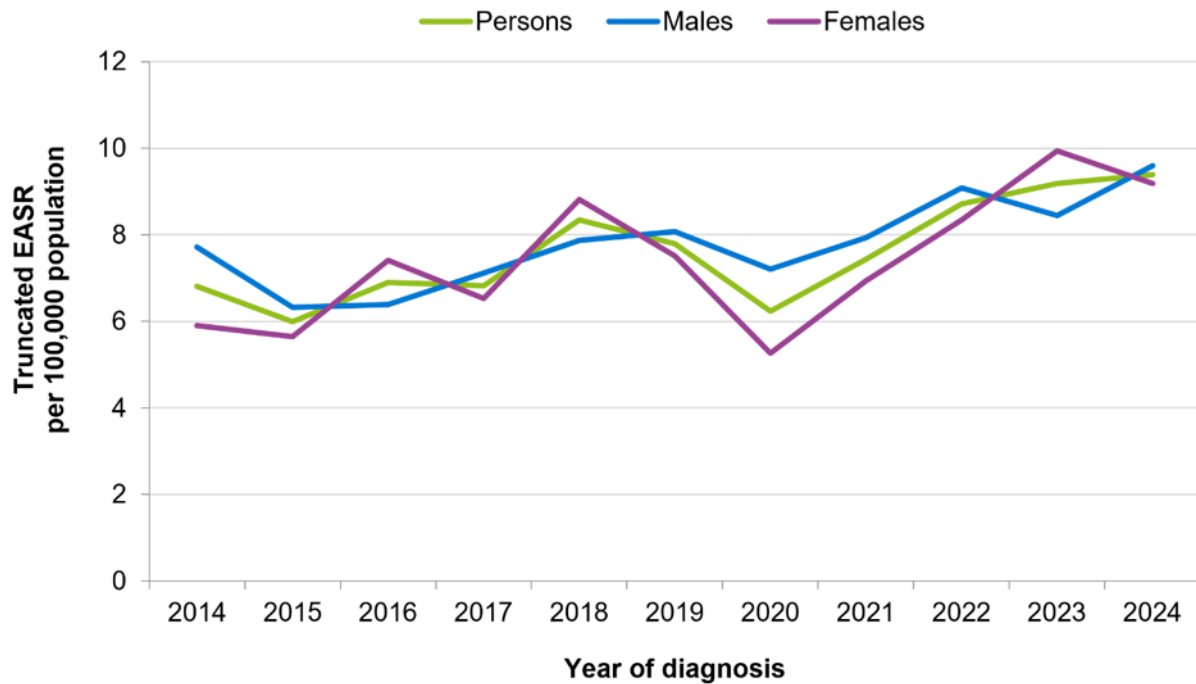
In 2024:

- There were 37,657 new cancers registered in Scotland (19,473 in males and 18,184 in females). This was similar to the previous year (179 fewer than in 2023).
- The risk of developing cancer overall was higher in males (724 per 100,000) than females (588 per 100,000).
- The most common cancer types in Scotland were prostate, breast, lung, and colorectal, accounting for 55% of all diagnoses.

In the decade up to, and including, 2024:

- There was a significant 4% increase in overall cancer incidence rates in males.
- In males, there were significant increases in the rates of prostate cancer (50%) and malignant melanoma of the skin (28%). There were significant decreases in the rates of lung cancer (23%), head and neck cancer (6%), bladder cancer (10%), oesophageal cancer (10%) and CUP (16%).
- In females, there were significant increases in the rates of breast cancer (8%), colorectal cancer (8%), and malignant melanoma of the skin (by more than a third, 37%). There were significant decreases in the rates of lung cancer (7%), CUP (15%), non-Hodgkin lymphoma (16%) and kidney cancer (9%).
- The incidence of colorectal cancer in under 50-year-olds has increased. The European age-sex-standardised rate (EASR) increased by 38% (from 7 per 100,000 to 9 per 100,000). The increase in rates was larger in females (56%) than males (25%).

European age-sex-standardised rate (EASR) of colorectal cancer in persons aged under 50 years old, 2014-2024, by sex



For those eligible to take part in national cancer screening programmes:

- Screen-detected cancers were more likely to be diagnosed at an early stage (stage I) than cancers detected by other methods. The percentage of stage I tumours for screen-detected cancers compared with cancers detected by other methods was: 67% vs. 33% for breast cancer; 30% vs. 14% for colorectal cancer; and 83% vs. 25% for cervical cancer.
- A decrease in early-stage cervical cancer diagnoses, with 47% diagnosed at stage I in 2024 compared with 54% in 2023, highlights the importance of improving uptake of cervical screening to support earlier diagnosis.

Falling cancer incidence reflects successful public health efforts:

- The long-term decrease in smoking is now reflected in decreasing incidence of cancers of the lung, head and neck, bladder and oesophagus.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination has resulted in no cases of cervical cancer in women under 25 years old in 2024.
- CUP often has poor outcomes, but incidence has fallen because diagnostic tests have become better at identifying the cancer's origin.
- Increasing proportions of cancers diagnosed at earlier stages reflect the benefits of screening, seen for breast cancer, and patients seeking help earlier, seen for lung cancer.

Cancer incidence remained higher in the most deprived areas, with a similar deprivation gap in 2020–2024 and 2015–2019 (26% and 29%, respectively). The risk of developing three of the most common cancers - prostate cancer, breast cancer and malignant melanoma of the skin -

PHS and official statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'.

was higher in the least deprived areas of Scotland. In contrast, the risk of lung, colorectal and cervical cancer was higher in the most deprived areas.

Background

The [Scottish Cancer Registry](#) collects information on every cancer in Scotland and uses the data to inform cancer control. Cancer registrations are believed to be essentially complete for the year 2024, but it is important to note that the cancer registration database is dynamic (i.e. late registrations for 2024 can still be recorded after these data have been published). Reporting of "all cancers" by convention excludes non-melanoma skin cancers, but every cancer is registered.

Cancer incidence reflects risk factors for developing cancer, efforts to detect cancer (e.g. public awareness, screening programmes and the impact of the pandemic on diagnostic pathways) and the at-risk population, which is increasing due to an ageing and expanding population.

Contact

Greig Stanners | Principal Information Analyst

David Morrison | Director of The Scottish Cancer Registry | phs.cancerstats@phs.scot

For all media enquiries please email phs.comms@phs.scot or call 0131 275 6105.

Further information

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in November 2011. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. Visit the UK Statistics Authority website for more information about the [Code of Practice](#) and [Accredited official statistics](#).

Visit our website for [further information about our statistics and PHS as an official statistics producer](#).

Data from this publication are available from the [publication page](#) on our website.

Open data from this publication are available from the [Scottish Health and Social Care Open Data platform](#).

The next release of this publication will be in 2027.

Other formats of this publication are available on request by calling 0131 314 5300 or emailing phs.otherformats@phs.scot.

PHS and official statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'.