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IARC reports marked differences in survival among patients diagnosed with cancer in countries in transition worldwide

Lyon, France, 3 January 2023 – A new study, published today in *The Lancet Oncology*,[1] reports large international differences in survival among patients diagnosed with 15 common cancer types in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The project – Cancer Survival in Countries in Transition, Volume 3 (SURVCAN-3) – is a collaboration between the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development (GICR), and population-based cancer registries worldwide. As well as increasing the local capacity of registries to collect and produce high-quality data on cancer survival, SURVCAN-3 aims to benchmark national and subnational estimates of cancer survival across countries to aid in the assessment of national cancer control policies.

The SURVCAN-3 study included data from more than 1.4 million patients diagnosed with 15 cancer types (oral cavity, nasopharynx, oesophagus, stomach, colon, rectum, liver, lung, breast, cervix uteri, ovary, prostate, bladder, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and leukaemia) from 68 registries in 32 countries across three continents. Patients were followed up to determine their vital status, and survival was estimated at 1, 3, and 5 years after diagnosis and reported according to country, world region, and the four-tier Human Development Index (HDI). The data presented in the new article are publicly available in the SURVCAN-3 online tool,[2] which is part of the Cancer Survival subsite of the IARC Global Cancer Observatory.

An analysis of survival estimates against national levels of HDI and universal health coverage indicated an association for most cancer types included in the study, particularly cancers of the oral cavity, colon, rectum, breast, prostate, and cervix uteri, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

"Survival varies substantially across countries in transition, especially for those cancer types that can be diagnosed or detected early and treated effectively. Countries with higher levels of national development tend to have higher survival rates," says Dr Isabelle Soerjomataram, Deputy Head of the Cancer Surveillance Branch

[1] Soerjomataram I, Cabasag C, Bardot A, Fidler-Benaoudia MM, Miranda-Filho A, Ferlay J, et al.; on behalf of the SURVCAN-3 collaborators (2023). Cancer survival in Africa, Central and South America, and Asia (SURVCAN-3): a population-based benchmarking study in 32 countries. *Lancet Oncol*. Published online 3 January 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(22)00704-5

[2] Soerjomataram I, Lam F, Bardot A, Bray F, Ervik M (2023). SURVCAN-3 online tool: International Cancer Survival Benchmarking. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer. Available from: https://gco.iarc.fr/survival/survcan.
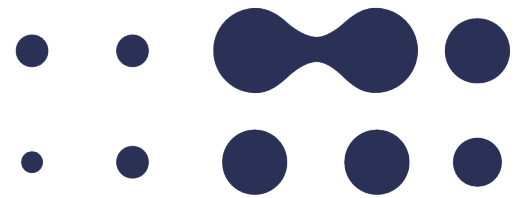
at IARC. "For example, for breast cancer, net survival at 3 years after diagnosis ranges from 56% in the Islamic Republic of Iran to 94% in the Republic of Korea. This illustrates the need for national strategies to detect breast cancer early while improving access to effective treatment."

The SURVCAN project was initiated in the 1990s, and the first volume reported survival for cancer cases diagnosed in the early 1980s from 10 registries in 5 countries. SURVCAN-2, which assessed cancer survival in the mid-1990s, increased the number of registries involved to 27 registries in 14 countries. The data for SURVCAN-3 include cases diagnosed in the period 2008–2012. "The SURVCAN-3 study more than doubles the number of cancer registries participating, to 68," says Dr Freddie Bray, Head of the Cancer Surveillance Branch at IARC. "This is due recognition of the strong commitment of registries to collect additional information to estimate cancer survival, as well as a growing interest in survival statistics aimed at continuously improving outcomes for those diagnosed with cancer."

Cancer is now the leading cause of death in most countries globally, and investments in cancer surveillance to plan, monitor, and evaluate the cancer burden are more important than ever. SURVCAN-3 represents a collaboration with the IARC-led GICR, a global partnership that seeks to improve the local coverage and quality of population-based cancer data within countries, to equip governments and policy-makers with the necessary surveillance tools to reduce the burden of and suffering from cancer worldwide.

"In addition to incidence and mortality statistics, survival estimates derived from population-based cancer registry data provide baseline information for effective cancer control," says IARC Director Dr Elisabete Weiderpass. "Accurate cancer survival estimates are essential for countries to examine the effectiveness of their health systems and how to respond effectively to improve national cancer outcomes."

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.