Statistics on Cancer Incidence 2020

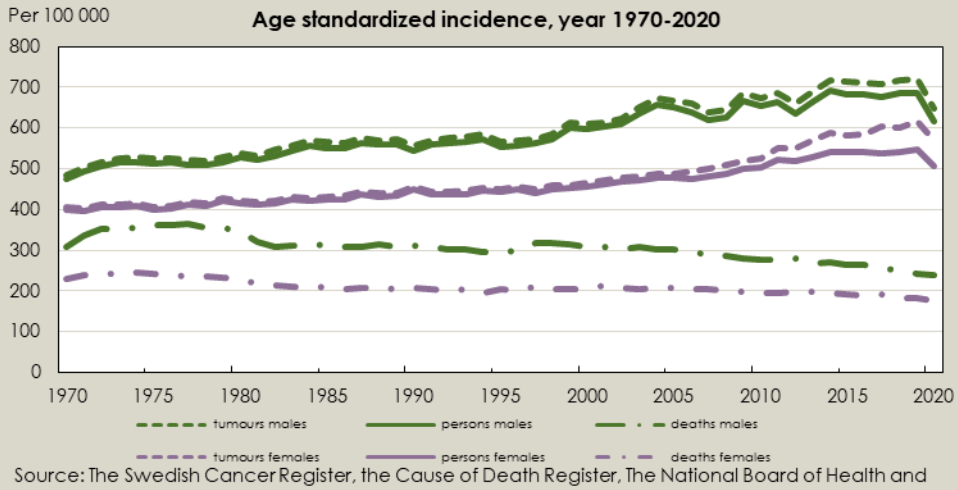
In 2020, 68 318 malignant tumours for 62 555 people were reported to the Cancer Registry. The number of people who received a cancer diagnosis was considerably higher than the number of deaths in cancer. It is important to take into account the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the health care system, particularly the tendency of seeking medical care and participating in screening programs. During this last year there was a 17 percent decline in reporting prostate cancer tumours and a 6 percent decline in reporting breast cancer tumours compared to the past three years. Not all cancer incidence was impacted similarly, for example the incidence of malign cervix cancer seems unchanged, while there was a decline in newly diagnosed pre-stages and benign cervix tumours.

Incidence and mortality over time

Figure 1 shows the incidence rates for all causes of cancer (per capita and per tumour) and cancer mortality for the years 1970–2020. The measures are given in numbers per 100 000 residents and are age standardized. The number of new cases, both number of people and tumours has increased since 1970, while the mortality has slightly decreased. Among women there is a stronger increase over time in tumour incidence than the per capita incidence. In 2020, there is a clear decline in the number of diagnosed tumours for men and women, which is likely an effect of the covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 1. Cancer incidence and mortality

Number of tumours, persons diagnosed and deaths from cancer, per 100 000

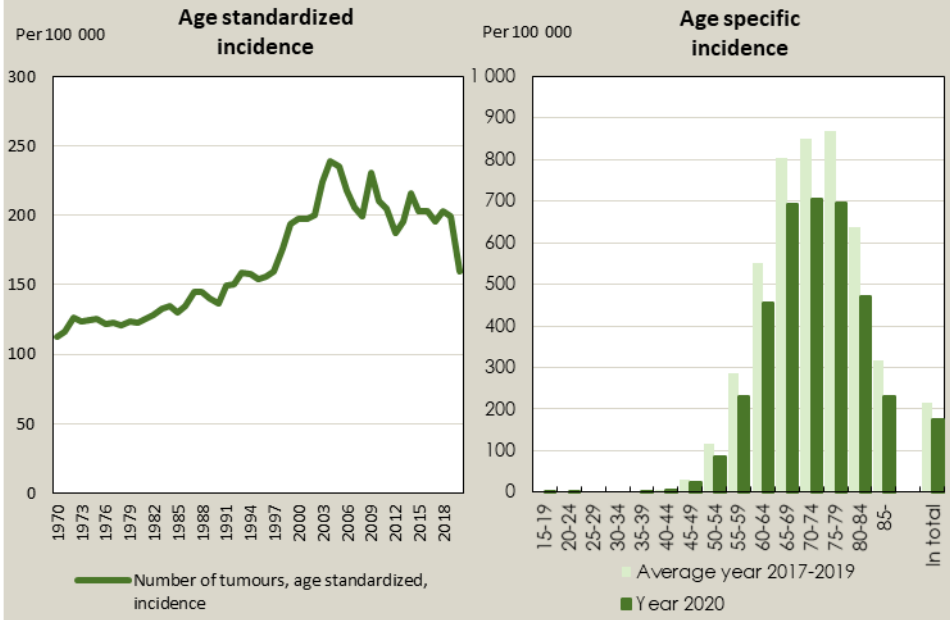


Source: The Swedish Cancer Register, the Cause of Death Register, The National Board of Health and Welfare

Prostate cancer

The age standardized incidence of prostate cancer (Figure 2, left diagram) has doubled from the 1970s to the beginning of 2000s. From approximately 140 to 240 cases per 100 000 men. In the last 10 years the incidence has slowly declined but with sharp fluctuations, which makes the trend difficult to assess. The sharp rise and large fluctuations in the incidence is likely connected to the introduction of the PSA-test, and that a number of scientific studies on prostate cancer screening have been conducted in recent years. In 2020 there is a clear decline in this specific cancer incidence with about 18 percent. The reduced incidence is seen in virtually all age groups but is greatest among men in the age group 50-54 years and men over 80 years. Some explanations may be that the covid-19 pandemic has led to a reduced tendency to seek medical care.

Figure 2. Prostate cancer across time and age groups, year 1970-2020

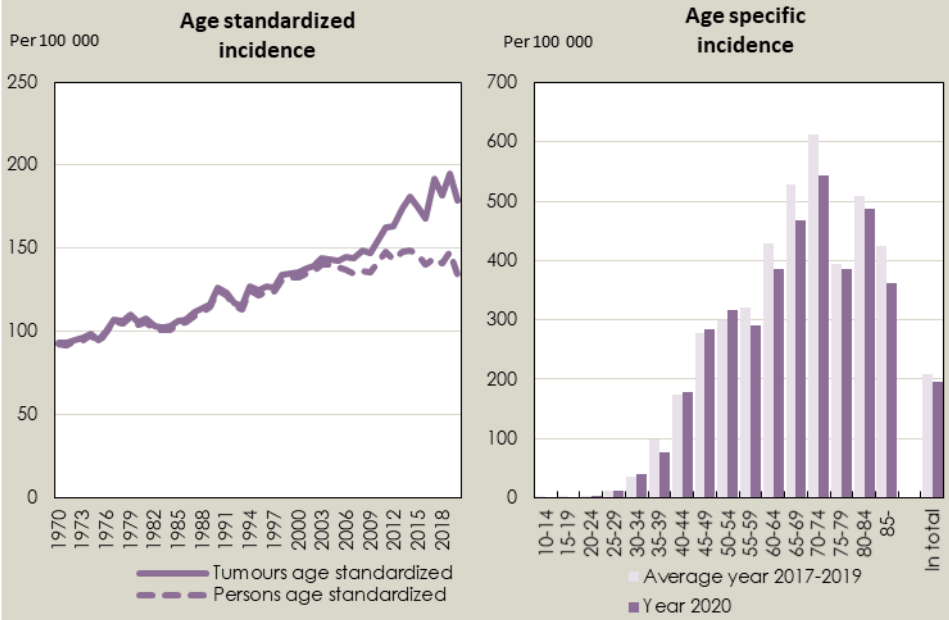


Source: The Swedish Cancer Register, The National Board of Health and Welfare

Breast cancer

Figure 3 shows that the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer increased by approximately 60 percent from the 1970s to the mid 2010s, then flattens out on a level of approximetly 144 women per 100 000. During the 2000s the number of tumours reported per capita increased, which resulted in a larger rise for the incidence in tumours than the incidence for women. The introduction of breast cancer screening has been a contributing factor to the higher incidence of breast cancer. In 2020, 7570 women were diagnosed with breast cancer, which is a decline compared to the period 2017-2019. This decline was most clear, about 10 percent, among women aged 55-75 years and women over 85 years (Figure 3). Several regions have temporarily reduced or paused the breast cancer screening programs during the first wave of the pandemic. Eventhough the screening activities reverted to a normal level during the latter part of year 2020, this may be an explanation for the observed statistics.

Figure 3. Breast cancer across time and age groups, year 1970-2020, females



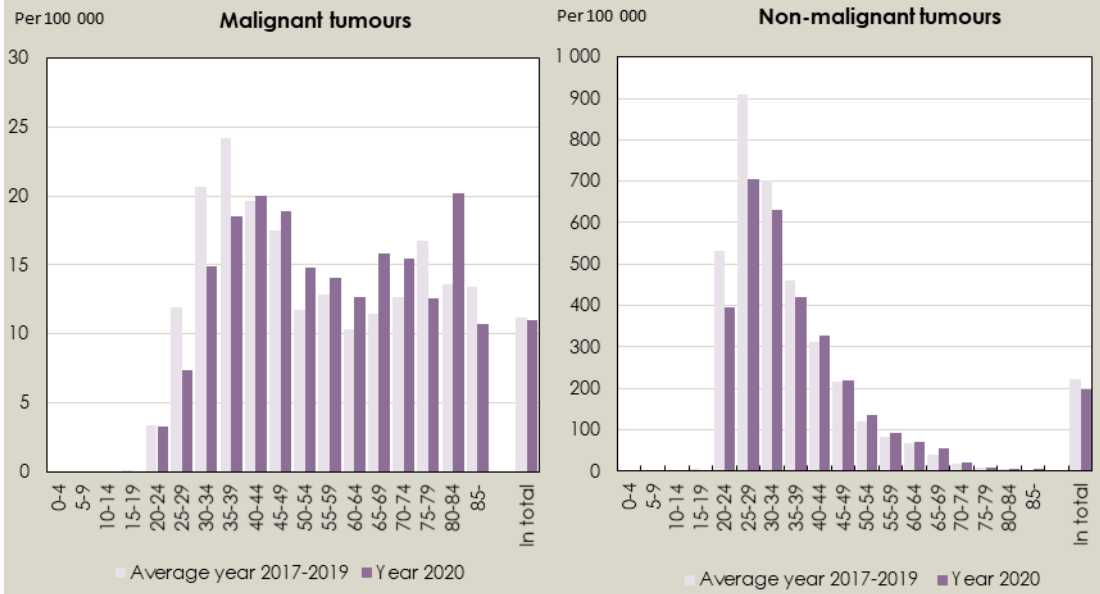
Source: The Swedish Cancer Register, The National Board of Health and Welfare

Cervix cancer

The incidence of cervix cancer for all ages (Figure 4 left diagram) in 2020 has not changed compared to the period 2017–2019. However, there is a clear decline in the age groups 25–39 years old. The National Board of Health and Welfare recommends screening of cervix cancer among women between the ages 23 to 69 years. The objective of the cervical cancer screening program is to detect precancerous cell changes, precancerous lesions, and remove them before they

develop into cancer tumours. Precancerous cell changes and lesions will be reported to the Cancer registry. In 2020 less precancerous changes were reported in the ages 20–39 compared to the average for the previous three years, which may be due to similar reasons as described earlier.

Figure 4. Cervix, malignant and non-malignant tumours
Number of tumours per 100 000, average for the years 2017-2019 and the value for the year 2020



Further information
More tables, graphs and other information are available in the Excel file:
www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/statistik/statistikamnen/cancer

You can access the data and produce your own tables and graphs with our Statistical Database:
www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/statistik/statistikdatabasen

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