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Survival rates after cancer diagnosis continue to rise

63% of all patients are still alive five years after diagnosis

Vienna, 2025-01-23 – Around 46 000 people are diagnosed with cancer in Austria every year, as reported by Statistics Austria in the run-up to World Cancer Day on 4 February. Breast, prostate, bowel or lung were affected in around half of all cases diagnosed in 2023. Survival rates after a cancer diagnosis are increasing.

“418 740 people in Austria were living with a cancer diagnosis at the beginning of 2024. Almost half of those were diagnosed more than ten years ago. Medical advances have further increased the chances of survival in the past ten years. 63% of people diagnosed with cancer between 2015 and 2019 were still alive five years later. For diagnoses five years earlier, the figure was 61%,” says Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas, referring to data from Statistics Austria’s Austrian National Cancer Registry.

Survival rates increase after a cancer diagnosis

Relative five-year survival has increased over the past decade, from 61% (diagnosis period 2010 to 2014) to around 63% (diagnosis period 2015 to 2019). The most important factors influencing survival after a cancer diagnosis include tumor entity and tumor stage at diagnosis.

Tumor sites with a good prognosis are primarily the testicles and thyroid gland. Here, the relative survival probability five years after diagnosis of a malignant tumor is 96% and 95%, respectively. Malignant tumors of the prostate and breast are also among the diseases with higher survival probabilities (relative five-year survival probability 95% and 88%, respectively).

Other malignant tumors have a poor or very poor prognosis. The observed survival probabilities for five years after diagnosis are 25% for the lung, 22% for the esophagus, 18% for the liver and 12% for the pancreas.

More and more people are living with cancer

In the period from 1983 to 2023, the Austrian National Cancer Registry recorded around 1.5 million new cancer cases in around 1.4 million people. Of these people, 418 740 were still alive at the beginning of 2024, of which 217 904 were women and 200 836 men. In relation to the total population, this means that around five in 100 people are living with a cancer diagnosis.

Over the past ten years, the number of new cases per year has risen from around 41 000 to around 46 000. Accordingly, cancer prevalence, i.e. the number of people living with cancer on a given date, has been rising continuously for years. In 2014, 336 400 people were living with a cancer diagnosis in Austria, which was around 82 000 fewer than at the start of 2024. This resulted in a 24% increase in prevalence from 2014 to 2024 (women 23% and men 26%). This is mainly due to the fact that, in absolute terms, there are more and more people of an older age as a result of demographic ageing and increasing life expectancy, and the likelihood of developing cancer increases with age. In addition, medical progress is improving the chances of survival for people suffering from cancer. Increased screening and improved diagnostic methods are also helping to detect cancer more frequently and at an earlier stage, thus increasing the number of new cases registered.

Most common new cancer cases: breast cancer in women, prostate cancer in men

The overall picture of new cases is unchanged compared to previous years. In 2023, 21 821 women and 24 697 men were diagnosed with cancer in Austria. The most common diagnoses were malignant tumors of the breast in women (6 902 cases) and malignant tumors of the prostate in men (7 485 cases), followed by malignant tumors of the lung (5 232 cases, both sexes combined) and malignant tumors of the colon or rectum (4 690 cases, both sexes combined).

Breast cancer accounted for around 32% of new cases of cancer in women and 17% of all cancer deaths in 2023. Breast cancer was therefore also the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in women. Prostate cancer accounted for just under a third (30%) of all newly diagnosed malignant neoplasms in men in 2023 and was responsible for around one in eight cancer deaths (13%) in men in 2023.

Lung cancer was the second most common cause of new cancer cases in 2023, with 2 334 cases (11%) in women and 2 898 cases (12%) in men. With around one in five cancer deaths, lung cancer ranked first among cancer-related causes of death for both genders (18% for women and 21% for men). Following a sharp increase in the risk of the disease in women, it has remained relatively stable in recent years, as has the risk of death.

The third most common site of new cases in 2023 was colorectal cancer with 2 150 cases in women and 2 540 cases in men (10% each). Colorectal cancer was responsible for around 10% of cancer deaths. In relation to the population, the risk of bowel cancer is noticeably lower for women than for men. The risk of developing the disease has fallen for men in recent years, while it has remained stable for women since 2017.

Detailed results and further information on cancer statistics can be found on our [website](#).

Incidence, mortality, five-year survival, and prevalence of cancer 2023

Tumor sites ¹	Incidence	Survival ²	Prevalence ³	Mortality
	Absolute numbers	in %	Absolute numbers	Absolute numbers
Head and Neck (C00-C14)	1 315	55.0	10 043	529
Esophagus (C15)	465	22.3	1 587	394
Stomach (C16)	1 237	36.8	7 691	705
Colon and Rectum (C18-21)	4 690	63.2	46 228	2 078
Liver (C22)	978	18.1	2 312	833
Pancreas (C25)	1 982	12.1	3 609	1 986
Larynx (C32)	285	59.0	3 036	143
Trachea, Bronchus and Lung (C33-C34)	5 232	24.9	17 703	4 136
Malignant Melanoma (C43)	2 015	84.2	27 357	410
Breast (C50)	6 971	87.6	94 343	1 643
Cervix (C53)	427	67.9	9 153	137
Corpus Uteri (C54)	1 107	78.9	15 078	177
Ovary (C56)	677	46.3	7 357	462
Prostate Gland (C61)	7 485	94.7	81 989	1 424
Testis (C62)	430	96.3	11 664	18
Kidney (C64)	1 330	79.8	17 721	384
Bladder (C67)	1 288	66.2	14 954	560
Central Nervous System (C70-C72)	749	30.9	4 769	600
Thyroid Gland (C73)	1 019	95.1	18 670	74
Hodgkin's disease (C81)	181	86.9	4 325	41
Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (C82-C86, C96)	1 572	68.2	15 351	689
Myeloma (C90)	565	54.7	3 202	353
Leukaemia (C91-C95)	1 295	55.2	10 826	823

Tumor sites ¹	Incidence	Survival ²	Prevalence ³	Mortality
	Absolute numbers	in %	Absolute numbers	Absolute numbers
Other cancer diagnosis (rest of C-codes and B21 excl. B21.2)	3 223	-	22 775	2 307
Cancer diagnosis total (C00-C97, excl. C44)	46 518	63.0	451 743	
All persons with a cancer diagnosis (C00-C97, excl. C44)	-		418 740	20 906

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Austrian National Cancer Registry (as of 10 January 2025) and Causes of Death Statistics.

1) Malignant invasive cases, incl. DCO cases. – 2) Cumulative five-year relative survival related to the diagnosis period 2015 to 2019, end of follow-up 31.12.2024. – 3) on 31.12.2023.

Information on methodology, definitions: With its cancer statistics, the Austrian National Cancer Registry of Statistics Austria provides the data basis for observing and analyzing cancer incidence in Austria, for evaluating health policy measures and also for further research. The register has been collecting data on cancer cases for the whole of Austria on a statutory basis for more than 40 years, on the basis of which cancer statistics are compiled annually and made available to the public. The cancer statistics provide a basis for fact-based public debates, empirical research and evidence-based decisions in society, politics and the economy. The results include data on incidence, prevalence and survival after a cancer diagnosis. They are based on mandatory cancer registrations, which in addition to information on the cancer contain information on the age, gender and place of residence of the patients. Information on the Cancer Registry and the Cancer Statistics Ordinance 2019 can be found here:

<https://www.statistik.at/en/about-us/surveys/educational-cultural-research-and-health-institutions/cancer-registry-notification>

Cancer incidence refers to the number of new cancer cases per calendar year.

Age-standardized incidence rates are adjusted for effects of a changing age structure over time or different age compositions of the respective reference populations and can be interpreted in terms of disease risk.

Cancer prevalence is the number of persons (or the proportion in a population) who are alive with a previous cancer diagnosis at a given time. All cancer diagnoses are included in this measure, regardless of the individual's health status. Prevalence data were calculated based on figures from the Austrian National Cancer Registry and a follow-up of the survival status of all registered individuals. Since individuals may also have multiple malignancies, prevalence is reported by individuals with cancer (regardless of the number of malignancies) as well as by tumor location. Consequently, the overall prevalence by tumor location is higher than by person.

Relative survival relates the observed survival of cancer patients after a certain period of time (cumulative, e.g. five years) to the survival of the total population, considering age and sex distribution. A relative survival rate of 100 % means that the mortality among cancer patients is as high as the mortality of the general population of the same age and sex. Relative survival is thus an estimator of cancer-specific survival that is independent of knowledge of the true cause of death. For more information on calculating cancer patient survival, see Dickman, P. (2004): "Estimating and modeling relative survival using SAS" at <https://www.pauldickman.com>.

The results on **cancer deaths** are derived from linking the data of the cancer registry with the data of the cause-of-death statistics. The definition of cancer deaths follows the rules of the International Association of Cancer Registries (IACR). Therefore, the results differ somewhat from the results of the cause-of-death statistics.

Statistics Austria is the central organization for official data and statistics on society, the economy, the state and the environment. As a national statistical institute, it is committed to the statutory principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity. Statistics Austria is headed by Tobias Thomas, Director General Statistics, and Franz Haslauer, Director General Finance.

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