

Increase in cancer survival shows 'power of research'

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Cancer survival rates have improved considerably in recent years, according to [official figures](#) from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

But while more people are beating [cancer](#), experts claim more still needs to be done to challenge its position as the number one cause of death in England and Wales.

The latest ONS [figures](#) revealed a total of 506,790 deaths were registered in England and Wales in 2013 – a rise of 1.5 per cent compared with the previous year. Cancer accounted for 28 per cent of this figure, making it one of the biggest killers in both countries.

Coronary heart disease was the leading cause of death for men during the 12-month period, accounting for 15 per cent of all male deaths, while dementia and Alzheimer's disease were the leading cause of [death](#) for women, responsible for 12 per cent of all female deaths.

"Cancer remains a huge challenge," said Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician.

"Although we have made great progress against it, it's still the highest cause of deaths in England and Wales, accounting for more than one in four of all deaths in 2013. This is partly because people in the UK are living longer.

"Cancer is more common in older people because there is more time for faults in cells to develop - these faults trigger the disease."

Survival rates among [cancer patients](#) have doubled in the last four decades thanks to increased research, with experts aiming to see three-quarters of people surviving the disease within the next 20 years.

But for some types of cancer there has been little improvement. Pancreatic, lung, oesophageal and brain tumour survival rates continue to buck the positive trend.

More than 8 out of 10 people affected by cancers of the breast (in women), prostate, testis and thyroid gland, and for Hodgkin lymphoma and melanoma of the skin, now survive for at least five years, as medical advances come to the fore.

"This increase in survival shows the power of research - thanks to better treatments, earlier diagnosis and greater awareness more people are surviving cancer than ever before," commented Nick Ormiston-Smith, head of statistical information at Cancer Research UK.

In comparison, the outlook for cancers of the brain, lung, oesophagus, liver, pancreas, stomach and for mesothelioma remains a challenge. Five-year survival in these cases is less than 22 per cent, while for [pancreatic cancer](#) the figure sits at 5 per cent.

Prof Johnson warned there is still much to do when it comes to cancer survival rates.

"Earlier diagnosis, access to the right treatment at the right time, and preventing the disease through lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking all play a role in beating cancer," he added.

Survival is generally lower for older patients than younger patients, even after taking into account deaths from causes other than cancer.

For cancers that occur in both sexes, survival tends to be higher in women. There is one notable exception though - bladder cancer - with five-year [survival rates](#) at 48 per cent in women and 60 per cent in men.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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