

# Victorian Cancer Registry

# Cancer Facts



Number 16 – May 2019

## Cancer prevalence in Victoria

**Cancer prevalence is defined as the number of people living with a past diagnosis of cancer.** This measure can be used as an indication of the burden of cancer for individuals, families and health services. Prevalence is a useful statistic to guide health services planning.

Persons counted in prevalence figures are often described as ‘survivors’. It should be noted that these persons include those undergoing initial cancer diagnostic tests and treatment, those receiving surveillance or treatment for recurrent or metastatic disease, those in palliative or end-of-life care, as well as those who are disease-free or in remission. Health care and support needs vary across this journey.

This Fact Sheet reports on 10-year cancer prevalence in Victoria at the 1st January 2018, this being the number of Victorians living at that date who have had a cancer diagnosis in the previous 10-year period (2008-2017 inclusive).

Fact Sheet 15 – Cancer Survivors in Victoria (May 2019) provides information on all cancer survivors in Victoria with a diagnosis in the 36 year period from 1982-2017. This provides a broader overview of long-term cancer survivors in Victoria.

Cancer prevalence is increasing at around 2% per year in Victoria as more cancers are being diagnosed and cancer survival is improving. This results in more people living with cancer.

On 1st January 2018, over 174,000 Victorians had a history of cancer diagnosed in the previous ten years (Table 1). This represents 2.8% of the total population or 1 in 36 Victorians.

Prostate and breast cancer had the highest prevalence because of their high incidence and good survival. Together they accounted for 40% of 10-year prevalent cancers in Victoria, and more than 1% of the Victorian population has experienced one of these common cancers in the last 10 years. There were 36,600 survivors of prostate cancer and 31,700 survivors of breast cancer representing 84% and 86% respectively of all those diagnosed during this period.

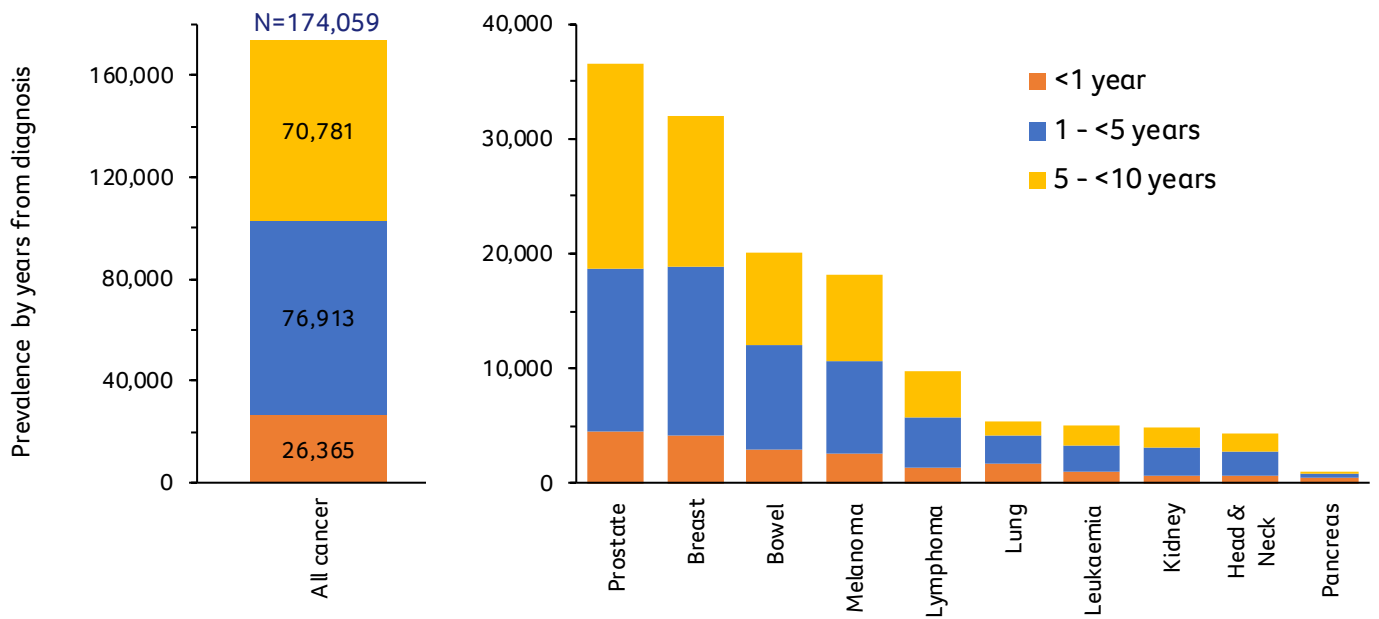
Colorectal cancer was next, with just over 20,000 (12%) survivors – this represents 63% of those diagnosed during the 10-year period. The prevalence of lung cancer is much lower (5,500, 3% of total) despite high incidence – this reflects poorer survival, with just 25% of those diagnosed during this period alive at 1st January 2018.

**Table 1: Ten-year prevalence, most common cancers, Victoria, 1st January 2018**

First 3 columns show the total survivors of cancer diagnosed 2008-2017 by sex and cancer type. Remaining columns show total 10-year prevalence, by cancer type, as % of (1) prevalence for all cancers, (2) total diagnoses in the 10 year period 2008-2017 and (3) the Victorian population in 2017.

Cancer type	10-Year prevalence by sex			Prevalence as proportion (%) of		
	Male	Female	All	Total prevalence	Total diagnoses	Victorian population
All cancer	91,460	82,599	174,059	100 %	65 %	2.8 %
Prostate	36,604	-	36,604	21.0 %	84 %	0.6 %
Breast (female)	-	31,731	31,731	18.2 %	86 %	0.5 %
Bowel	10,729	9,369	20,098	11.5 %	63 %	0.3 %
Melanoma	9,686	8,500	18,186	10.4 %	85 %	0.3 %
Lymphoma	5,349	4,348	9,697	5.6 %	75 %	0.2 %
Lung	2,754	2,714	5,468	3.1 %	25 %	0.1 %
Leukaemia	2,987	1,998	4,985	2.9 %	61 %	0.1 %
Kidney	3,172	1,771	4,943	2.8 %	73 %	0.1 %
Head & Neck	3,095	1,278	4,373	2.5 %	66 %	0.1 %
Pancreas	554	548	1,102	0.6 %	17 %	0.0 %

Figure 1: 10-year prevalence by time since diagnosis for all cancer and common cancers, Victoria, 1st January 2018



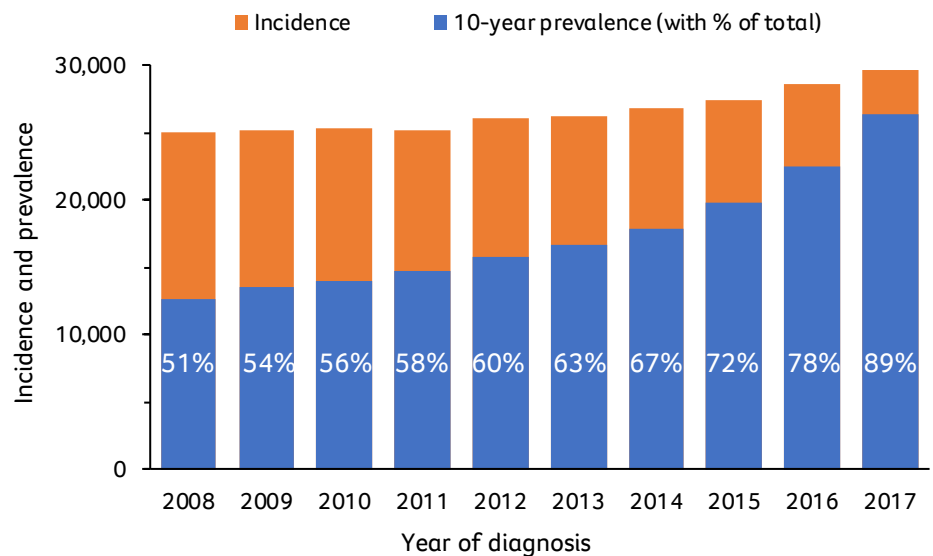
Ten-year prevalence estimates represent a mixture of cases - from these newly diagnosed through to long-term survivors. Figure 1 shows prevalence estimates at different times since diagnosis for all cancer and leading cancer types. These times represent different phases in the cancer journey from new diagnoses and treatment (< 1 year) through to long-term survivorship (5 to 10 years). Across all cancers, prevalence was highest at one to five years after diagnosis. For prostate cancers, there are actually more long-term survivors with almost 18,000 men diagnosed 5- <10 years compared with 14,000 men 1- <5 years previously. For other common

high survival cancers, such as breast, bowel, melanoma and lymphoma, the proportions of 1- <5 and 5- <10 year prevalence are similar, whilst for cancers with poor prognosis those diagnosed within one year outnumber long-term survivors - for lung and pancreas cancer 30% and 40% of prevalence is persons diagnosed in the previous 12 months.

Figure 2 shows 10-year prevalence for all cancers as a proportion of the total incidence for each year - as expected, the proportion surviving decreases over time, but it is also clear that this proportion decreases most steeply in the first few years after diagnosis and more slowly after five years.

Figure 2: 10-year prevalence as a proportion (%) of total incidence by year, Victoria 2008-2017

Note that these figures are not the same as survival - these figures show all persons alive at 1st January 2018 who were diagnosed in a given year - this is a different measure to routinely published survival figures that estimate those who have not died from their cancer within a specified time period (usually 5 years).



**For more information about Victorian cancer statistics:**

[www.cancervic.org.au/research/registry-statistics/statistics-data](http://www.cancervic.org.au/research/registry-statistics/statistics-data)  
[www.cancervic.org.au/search/registry-statistics/?section=vcr-publications](http://www.cancervic.org.au/search/registry-statistics/?section=vcr-publications)  
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 Cancer Council Victoria. Cancer Facts 16: Cancer prevalence in Victoria. May 2019

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