About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides information on the relationship between cancer stage and socio-economic circumstances in Scotland, covering the years 2014-2018 for the sixteen most common types of cancer with the most complete information on stage.

Main Points

- The stage at which a cancer is diagnosed is generally an indicator of subsequent survival; the earlier the stage, the better the survival.

- Among the commonest cancers in Scotland, there was convincing evidence that socio-economic deprivation increased the likelihood of being diagnosed with more advanced cancers of the bowel (colo-rectum); cervix; female breast; head and neck; and prostate. For these cancers, patients were more likely to have cancers that had spread to other parts of the body (metastatic disease - stage IV) in the most deprived groups compared to the least deprived groups.

Proportion of cancer with metastatic disease (stage IV) within each deprivation quintile, Scotland, 2014-2018.

Source: Scottish Cancer Registry

1. Staging information for head and neck is available only from 2016-2018.
None of the cancers considered showed a consistent association with deprivation for earlier stages.

There are several reasons why socio-economic deprivation might increase the likelihood of cancer being diagnosed at a later stage. These include lower rates of participation in cancer screening (breast, bowel and cervical). Further work is needed to explore the reasons for these patterns to inform interventions to reduce inequalities in stage of cancer when it is diagnosed.

Background

The Scottish Cancer Registry has been collecting information on cancer since 1958. Data collected by the Registry are published by PHS and are used for a wide variety of purposes. Cancer registrations are believed to be essentially complete for the year 2018, but it is important to note that the cancer registration database is dynamic.

The information in this publication will be included within the Cancer Incidence in Scotland publication from April 2021 onwards.

About 40% of cancers are potentially preventable through behavioural and lifestyle changes. Smoking, obesity, alcohol and diet are among the largest modifiable risk factors for cancer in Scotland.

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Further Information

Data from this publication are available from the publication page on our website. The next release of this publication will be April 2021.

PHS and Official Statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.