

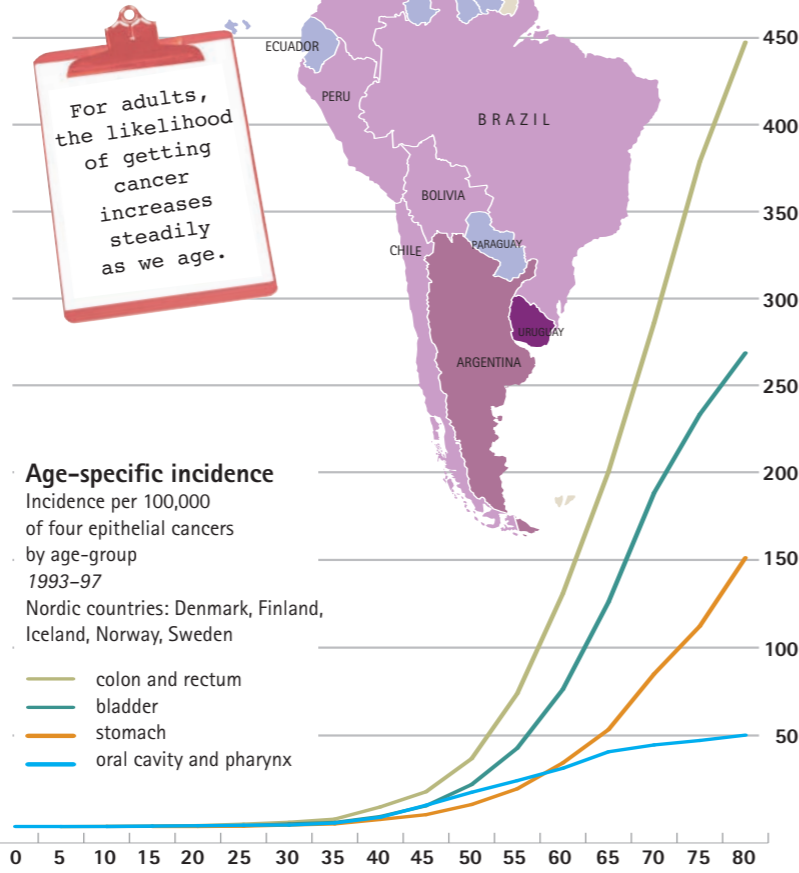
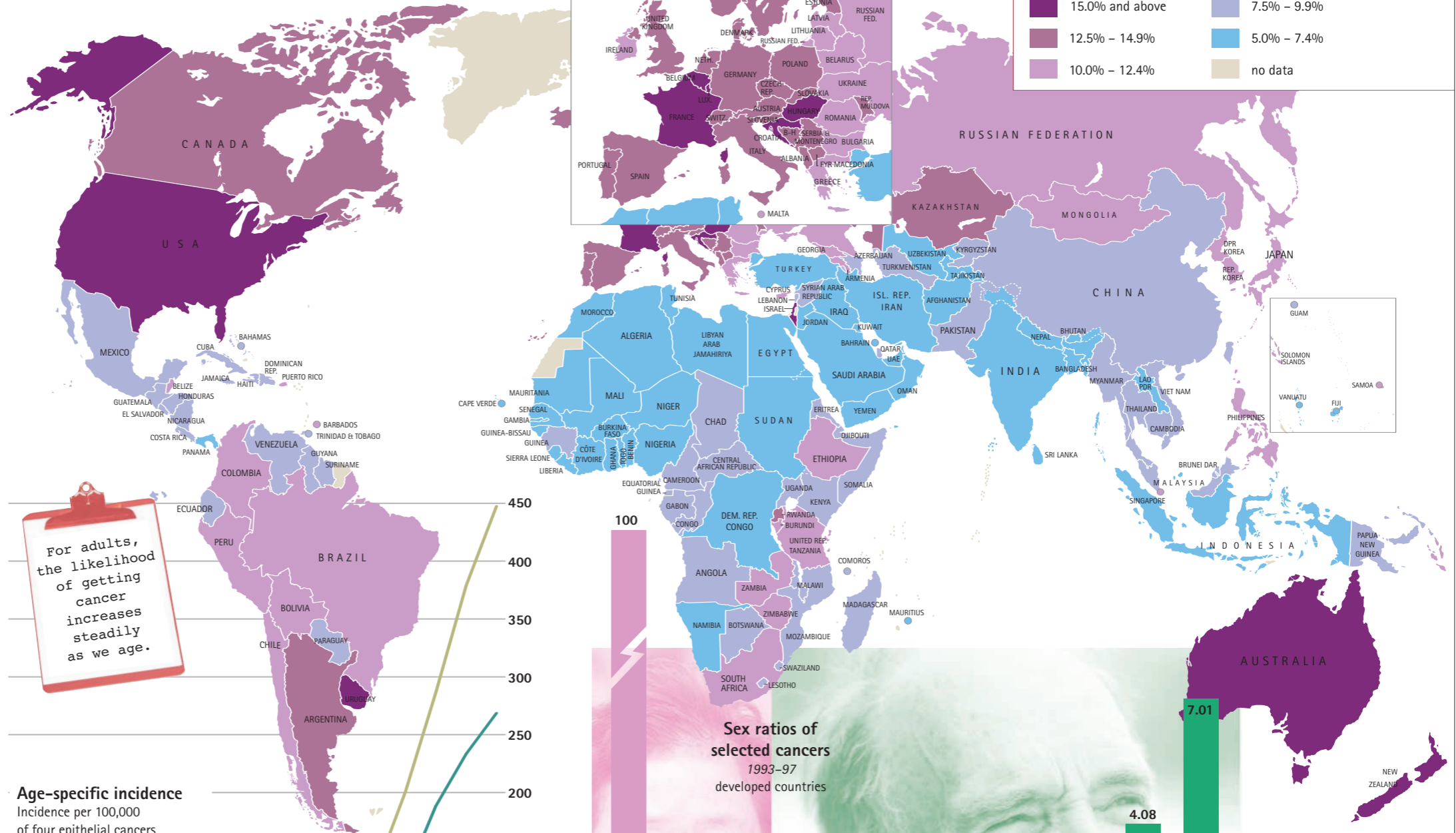
The risk of getting cancer

"One evil in old age is that you think every little illness is the beginning of the end. When a man expects to be arrested, every knock on the door is an alarm."
Sydney Smith, 1836

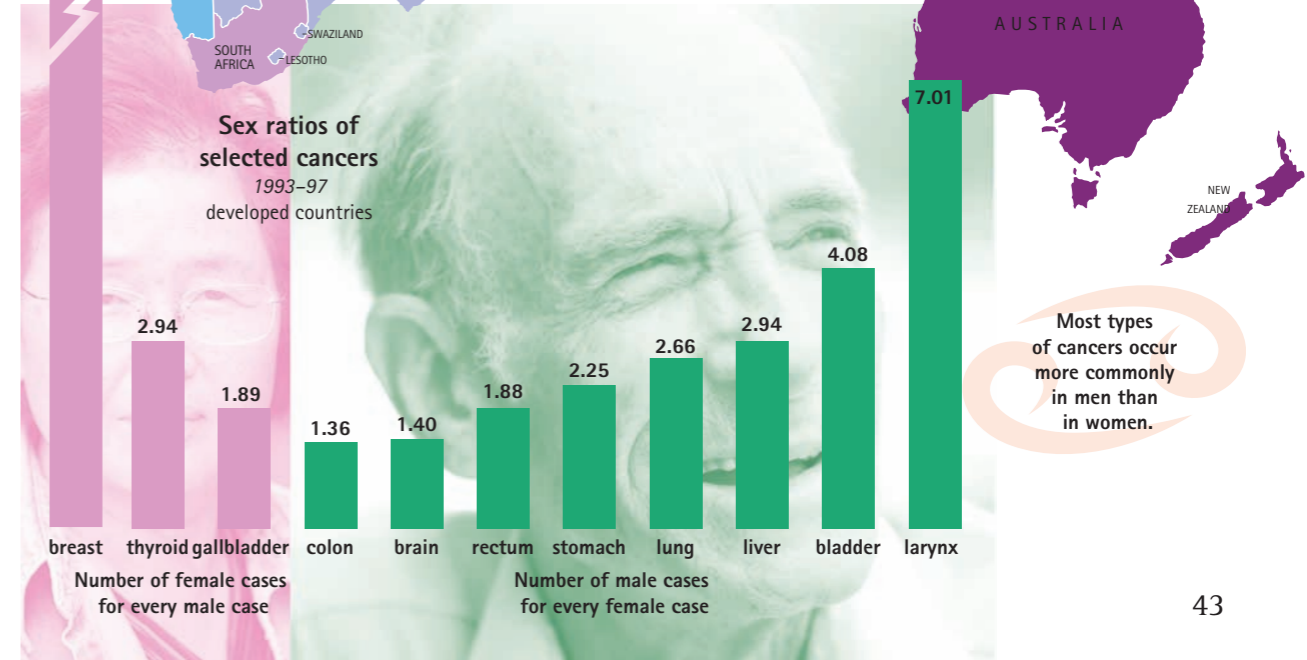
The most common cancers involve epithelial tissues (linings of the airways, gastrointestinal and urinary systems), and the risk of these increases rapidly with age, as does the risk of cancer as a whole. Cancer develops when a sequence of mutations occurs in critical genes in one cell of the body, as a result of exposure to carcinogens, such as tobacco, infectious organisms, and chemicals, and internal factors such as inherited mutations, hormones, and immune conditions. Cumulative exposure to such agents increases with time, so that the probability of cancer increases as we age.

In children, certain cancers, such as leukaemias and cancers of connective tissue, are more common than those of epithelial tissues. The risk of cancer is lowest in children aged between 10 and 14 years. Most types of cancer occur more often in men than in women, partly because of greater exposure to carcinogens.

The populations of developing countries are younger than those of the developed regions of the world, and for this reason cancer is less frequent, and the average age at diagnosis is younger than in developed countries. However, the chance of a person developing a cancer during their lifespan does not vary greatly around the world, ranging from about 15 percent by age 65 and 27 percent by age 75 in the USA, compared with 6 percent and 10 percent in Oman.



For adults, the likelihood of getting cancer increases steadily as we age.



Most types of cancers occur more commonly in men than in women.