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Cancer in children

Cancer is rare in childhood (an estimated 9,510 cases occur in the USA each year), but it is still a leading cause of death in this age group in developed countries.

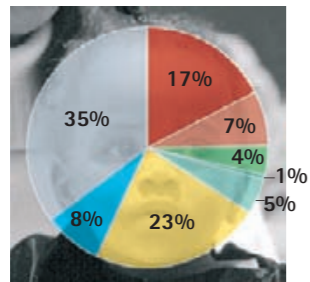
Acute leukaemia is the most common form of cancer for children in most countries, especially in early childhood. In tropical Africa, lymphomas are more common. Brain tumours generally account for one-fifth to one-quarter of childhood cancers. Carcinomas, the common epithelial cancers of adults, are rare

in children. Sarcomas of bones and soft tissue are much more common, accounting for over 10 percent of cancers, compared with less than 2 percent in adults.

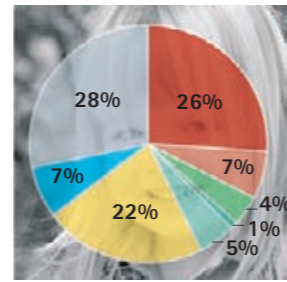
Hereditary cancer syndromes account for the occurrence of several types of childhood cancer (especially retinoblastoma and Wilms tumour). A few environmental exposures have been identified as risk factors, mostly related to infectious agents. These are responsible for the frequency of

Kaposi sarcoma and Burkitt lymphoma in Africa, for example.

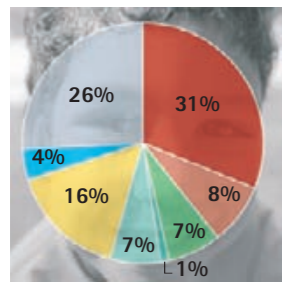
There has been an increase in the incidence of childhood cancer in the USA and in Europe since the 1970s, although this may have ceased since the 1990s. However, this has been accompanied by great improvements in the treatment of childhood cancers, with resultant benefits in terms of survival. Mortality from cancer in childhood is therefore falling in the developed world.



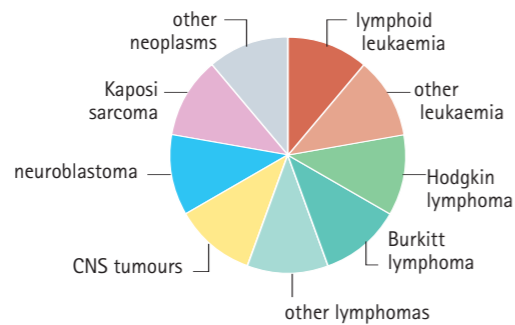
USA (black)



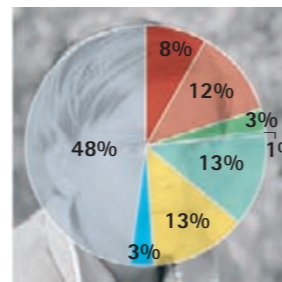
Europe (white)



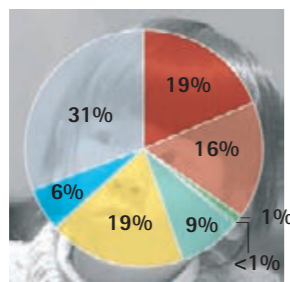
Latin America



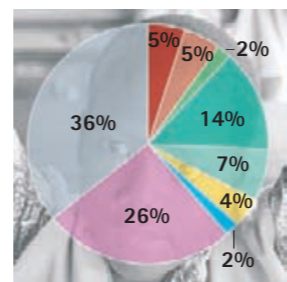
Cancers in children under 15 years 1990s selected populations



India



East Asia



Africa

