more than 2.1 million fewer cancer deaths over the past two decades, progress that is driven by rapid declines in death rates for the four most common cancer types – lung, colorectal, breast, and prostate (Figures 1 and 2).

Do Cancer Incidence and Death Rates Vary by State?

Tables 4 (page 7) and 5 (page 8) provide average annual incidence (new diagnoses) and death rates for selected cancer types by state. The variation by state is much larger for some cancers (e.g., lung) than for others (e.g., non-Hodgkin lymphoma). For more information about geographic disparities in cancer occurrence, see page 53.

Who Is at Risk of Developing Cancer?

Cancer usually develops in older people; 87% of all cancers in the United States are diagnosed in people 50 years of age or older. Certain behaviors also increase risk, such as smoking, eating an unhealthy diet, or not being physically active. In the US, approximately 41 out of 100 men and 38 out of 100 women will develop cancer during their lifetime (Table 6, page 14). These probabilities are estimated based on cancer occurrence in the general population and may overestimate or underestimate individual risk because of differences in exposures (e.g., smoking), family history, and/or genetic susceptibility.

Relative risk is the strength of the relationship between exposure to a given risk factor and cancer. It is measured by comparing cancer occurrence in people with a certain exposure or trait to cancer occurrence in people without this characteristic. For example, men and women who smoke are about 25 times more likely to develop lung cancer than nonsmokers, so their relative risk of lung cancer is 25. Most relative risks are not this large. For example, women who have a mother, sister, or daughter with a history of breast cancer are about twice as likely to develop breast cancer as women who do not have this family history; in other words, their relative risk is about 2. For most types of cancer, risk is higher with a family

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**Figure 1. Trends in Age-adjusted Cancer Death Rates**

- **Lung & bronchus**
- **Stomach**
- **Colon & rectum**
- **Prostate**
- **Liver†**
- **Pancreas†**

*Per 100,000 male population
†Mortality rates for pancreatic and liver cancers are increasing.

Note: Due to changes in ICD coding, numerator information has changed over time. Rates for cancers of the liver, lung and bronchus, uterus, and colon and rectum are affected by these coding changes.


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