Reproductive and hormonal factors have changed over the last century, resulting in changing risk patterns for associated cancers.

Reproductive habits and women's hormonal status have changed enormously over the past century. Age at menarche and the average number of births have decreased, mainly in high-income countries.

Earlier age at menarche is associated with increased risk of certain cancers; during the twentieth century, age at menarche decreased in many high-income countries.

Breastfeeding and childbearing reduce the risk of breast cancer among women, whereas oral contraceptive use and hormone replacement therapy increase the risk.

Larger family sizes and longer lifetime length of breastfeeding, while no longer representative of reproductive patterns in developed countries today, result in fewer cases of breast cancer.

Estimates of fewer cases of breast cancer with hypothetical reproductive patterns of the past, i.e., an average of 2.5 children and 8.7 months breastfeeding in developed countries; “larger family sizes” are defined as an average of 6.5 children; longer durations of breastfeeding are defined as total of 13 years of breastfeeding.

Fertility rates have decreased by 50% or more in recent decades in many countries.