There are more than 370 million Indigenous peoples spanning at least 70 countries worldwide. Indigenous peoples generally face disadvantage and have worse health than non-Indigenous people. Data related to cancer in these populations tend to be absent or of poor quality making many Indigenous peoples statistically invisible, with the majority of data that exist coming from a few high-income countries. There is under-reporting of cancer incidence and mortality in many jurisdictions. Indigenous peoples often have higher incidence and mortality rates of cancers related to exposure to tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, physical inactivity, high BMI, and diabetes mellitus than non-Indigenous people living in the same countries, although cancer patterns vary from country to country.

FIGURE 15.1 Cancer-causing infections such as Helicobacter pylori and hepatitis B virus, which are related to poverty and overcrowding, tend to be higher in Indigenous populations, particularly in regions where vaccination for hepatitis B is not occurring. Further, survival after diagnosis is lower, and its improvement is slower in regions where vaccination for hepatitis B is not occurring. Further, survival after diagnosis is lower, and its improvement is slower in Indigenous populations, suggesting Indigenous peoples often have higher incidence and mortality rates of cancers related to exposure to tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, physical inactivity, high BMI, and diabetes mellitus than non-Indigenous people living in the same countries, although cancer patterns vary from country to country.

FIGURE 15.2 Relative risk of cancer-specific mortality for Indigenous compared with non-Indigenous peoples by country and site.*

Cancer mortality rates in Indigenous people can be many times higher than those of non-Indigenous people in some countries.

New Zealand is the only country in the world that routinely records and reports national-level cancer statistics for its Indigenous population.

FIGURE 15.3 Prevalence (% of H. pylori among Indigenous peoples, select regions**

Indigenous peoples in many countries have a high prevalence of H. pylori, an infection which causes stomach cancer.

*Source varies by country. See Sources and Methods, page 116

**Based on 2017-2018 figures, an infection which causes stomach cancer.

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THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HAS CALLED FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CYLICAL CANCER.

While disease burden is highest in lower- and middle-income countries, significant disparities exist in high-income countries. In Australia, cervical cancer incidence in Indigenous women is double that of non-Indigenous women, with mortality rates over three times higher. Strategies and actions needed to accelerate cervical cancer elimination for Indigenous women globally must be led by Indigenous women and form part of the draft global strategy tabled at the 2020 World Health Assembly.

FIGURE 15.4 Cancer mortality rates in Indigenous people can be many times higher than those of non-Indigenous people in some countries.