

Regional Diversity

EUROPE

Breast, prostate, lung, and colorectal cancers represent over half of all cancer diagnoses in Europe.

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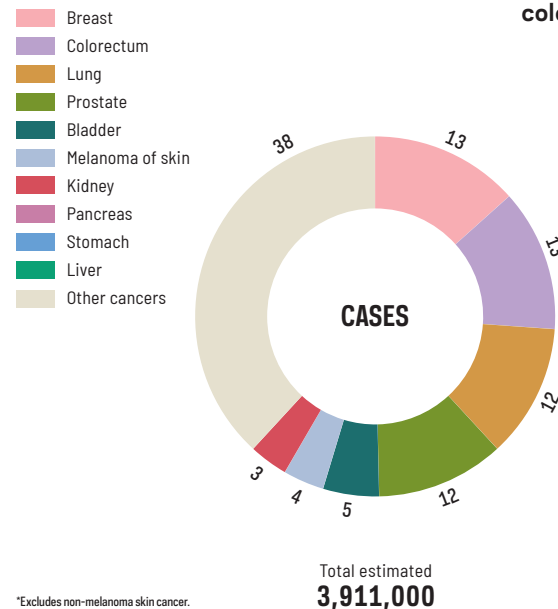
The diverging health trends (including cancer) in Europe are a testimony to both the successes and failures of health policy in Europe.

— Johan Mackenbach, Professor of Public Health at Erasmus MC, and Martin McKee, Professor of European Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

There were an estimated 3.9 million new cancer cases and 1.9 million cancer deaths in Europe in 2018. Cancers of the female breast (523,000 new cases, 13% of all cancer cases), colorectum (500,000, 13%), lung (470,000, 12%), and prostate (450,000, 12%) were the most common cancers on the continent, and combined they represented almost half of the overall cancer burden. **FIGURE 21.1** For men, prostate cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer in almost all northern and western European countries, and lung cancer was the most commonly diagnosed in most Eastern European countries. For women, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in all European countries. **MAP 21.1** These cancers were also the leading causes of cancer death in Europe: lung (388,000 deaths, 20%), colorectum (242,000, 13%), female breast (138,000, 7%), and pancreas (128,000, 7%).

Substantial variation in incidence and mortality rates are observed at the national level, where cancer incidence rates in males vary from 430 per 100,000 in Ireland to 239 in Montenegro. The lifetime risk of a cancer diagnosis ranges from 35% in Ireland—indicating that 1 in 3 persons in Ireland will be diagnosed with cancer over the course of their lifetime—to 25%, or 1 in 4 persons, in Montenegro. **FIGURE 21.2** Similarly, a twofold difference in rates is seen for mortality, with the highest and lowest mortality rates observed in Hungary and Sweden, respectively. The risk of dying from cancer in men varied from 22% in the Republic of Moldova to 10% in Iceland, and in women from 13% in Hungary to 7% in Spain.

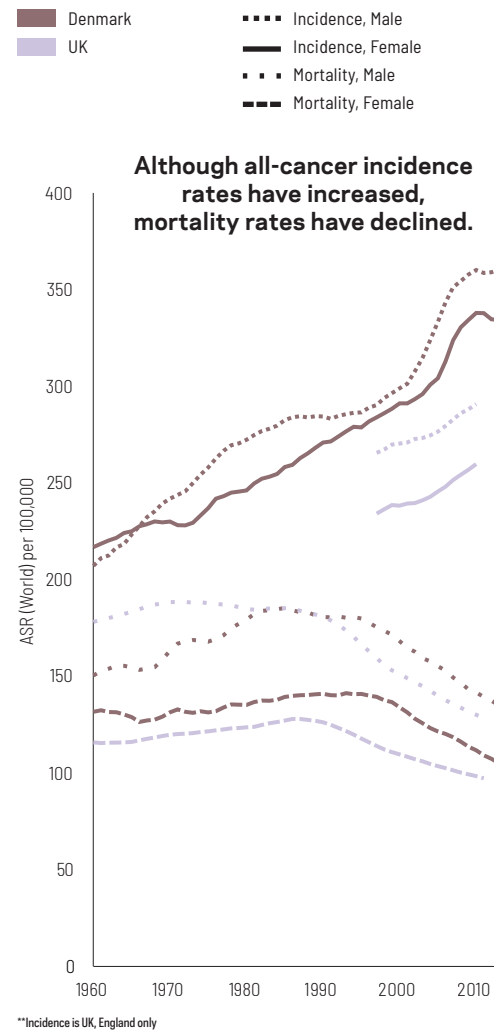
**FIGURE 21.1**  
Estimated number\* of new cancer cases vs. deaths and distribution (%) by type, both sexes, 2018



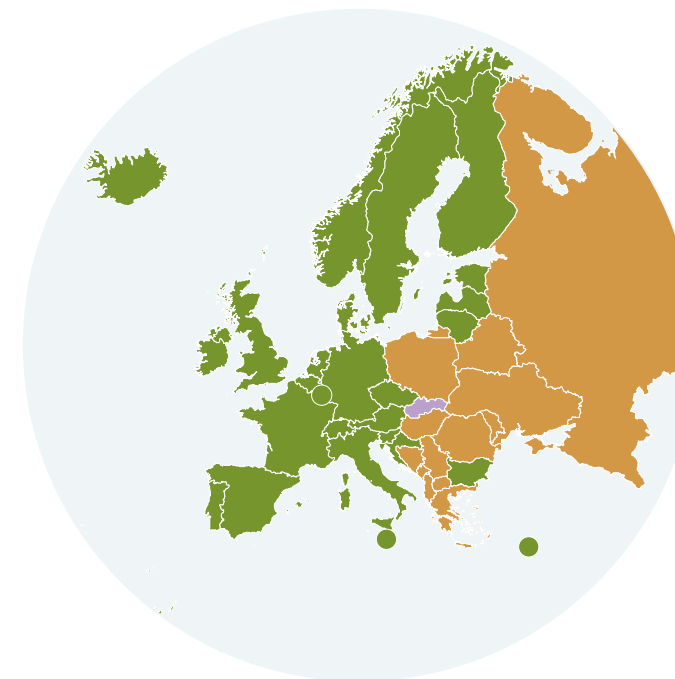
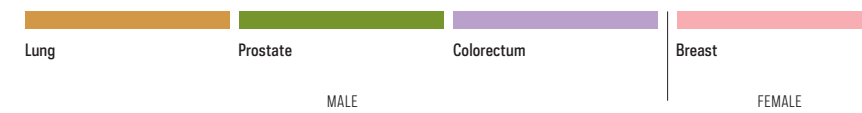
\*Excludes non-melanoma skin cancer.

Incidence trends for all cancer sites combined have continued to rise in many countries, although at a slower pace in recent years. This slower increase partly results from a stabilization or decline in breast and prostate cancers, countered by an increase in colorectal cancer. **FIGURE 21.3** On the other hand, overall cancer death rates are steadily decreasing in Europe, mainly due to decreasing death rates from breast and prostate cancers as well as lung (male only, particularly in Northern and Western Europe). In Central and Eastern European men, lung cancer incidence and mortality rates are beginning to stabilize or decline. But in women across Europe, who for the most part acquired the smoking habit several decades after men, lung cancer rates are still rising, though there are early signs of stabilization in recent years in some countries, notably in the highest-risk countries of Northern Europe.

**FIGURE 21.3**  
Trends in all cancer sites combined\* in Denmark and the United Kingdom\*\*, 1960-2014



**MAP 21.1** Most commonly diagnosed cancers in Europe among males and females, 2018



MALE

FEMALE

Lung and prostate cancers are the most frequent cancers in most European countries among men, while breast cancer ranks first in all European countries in women.

Europeans represent about one-tenth of the global population, yet one in four of all cancer diagnoses occur in this region.

In many European countries, one in three people will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 75.

**FIGURE 21.2**  
Lifetime risk (%) of a cancer diagnosis in European countries, by sex

