

Malignant Melanoma Factsheet

March 2005

Skin cancers are extremely common, with more than 70,000 new cases recorded* and an estimated 100,000 cases diagnosed each year in the UK. Malignant melanoma is the least common form with 7,300 cases diagnosed each year. But melanoma is more serious than other types of skin cancer claiming over 1,700 lives each year in the UK, compared with only 514 deaths for non-melanoma skin cancer.

INCIDENCE

In 2001 around 7,300 people were diagnosed with malignant melanoma in the UK.

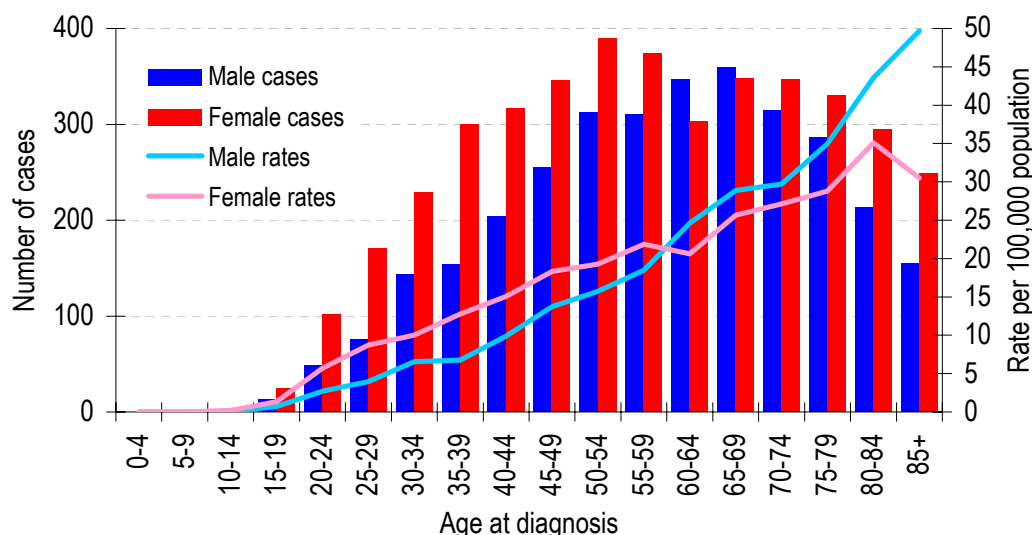
Malignant melanoma is more common in women than men, with more than half (56%) of malignant melanomas diagnosed in females.

Table One: Number of new cases and age standardised incidence rates malignant melanoma, by country and sex, UK, 2001

	England	Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland	UK
Number of new cases					
Males	2,638	170	300	85	3,193
Females	3,424	200	378	126	4,128
Persons	6,062	370	678	211	7,321
Age-standardised rate^t					
Males	10.1	10.7	11.2	10.6	10.2
Females	11.8	10.8	12.5	13.2	11.8
Persons	10.9	10.7	11.7	11.9	11.0

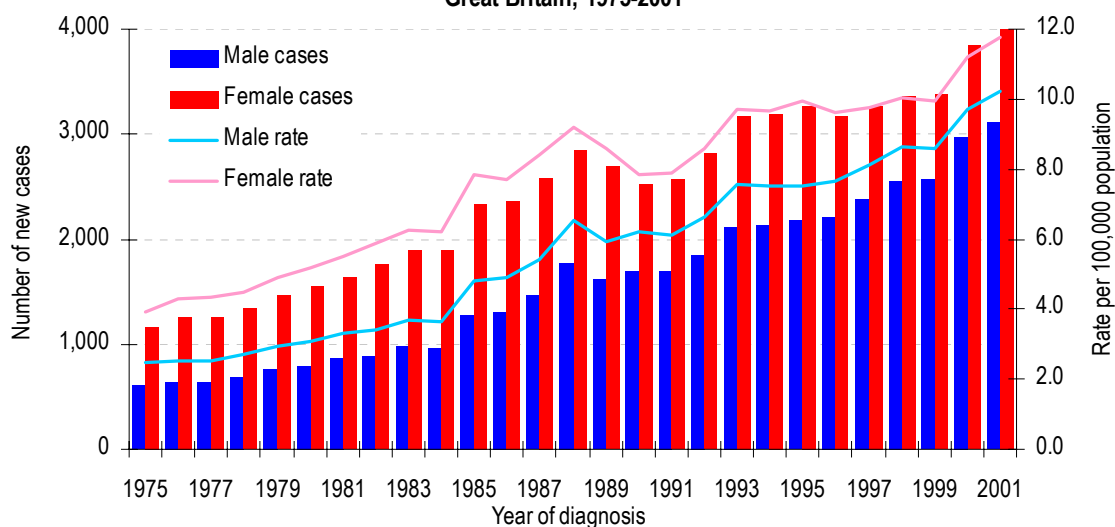
The risk of being diagnosed with malignant melanoma increases with age. Incidence rates are highest in the over 75s. However, it is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in those aged 15-34.

Figure One: Number of new cases and age-specific incidence rates by sex, malignant melanoma, UK 2001



Since the 1970s malignant melanoma has seen the largest increase in incidence rates compared to other major cancers.

Figure Two: Number of new cases and incidence rates, by sex, malignant melanoma, Great Britain, 1975-2001



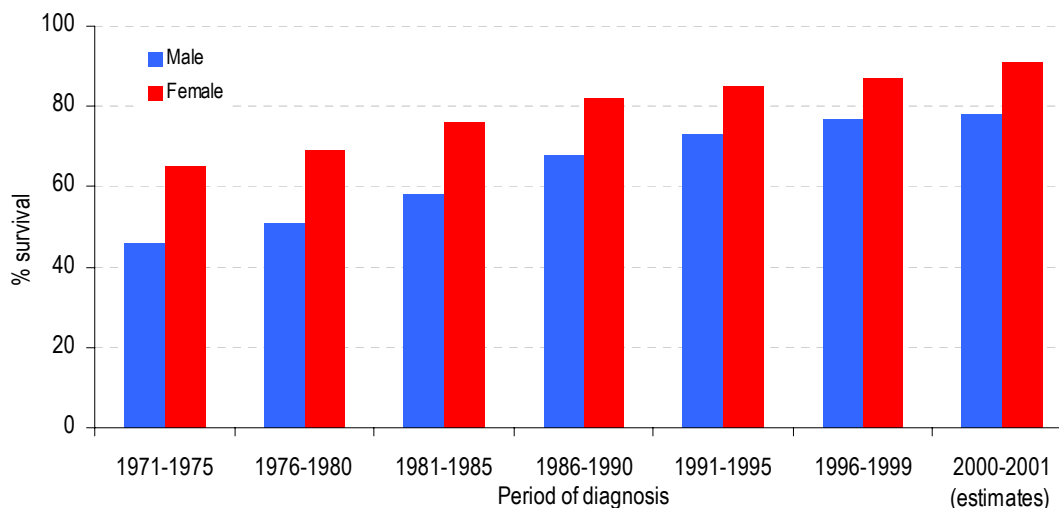
SURVIVAL

Survival is strongly associated with thickness of tumour at time of diagnosis. Five year relative survival in patients with melanoma thinner than 1.5mm is over 90%, while for those with tumours thicker than 3.5mm it is only 42% in men and 54% in women.

Overall women have higher five year survival than men, around 91% compared with 78% for patients diagnosed 1996-1999.

This is an improvement from 65% and 46% respectively for patients diagnosed in the early 1970s.

Figure 3: Relative five year survival, malignant melanoma, England & Wales, patients diagnosed 1971-1975 to 2000-2001



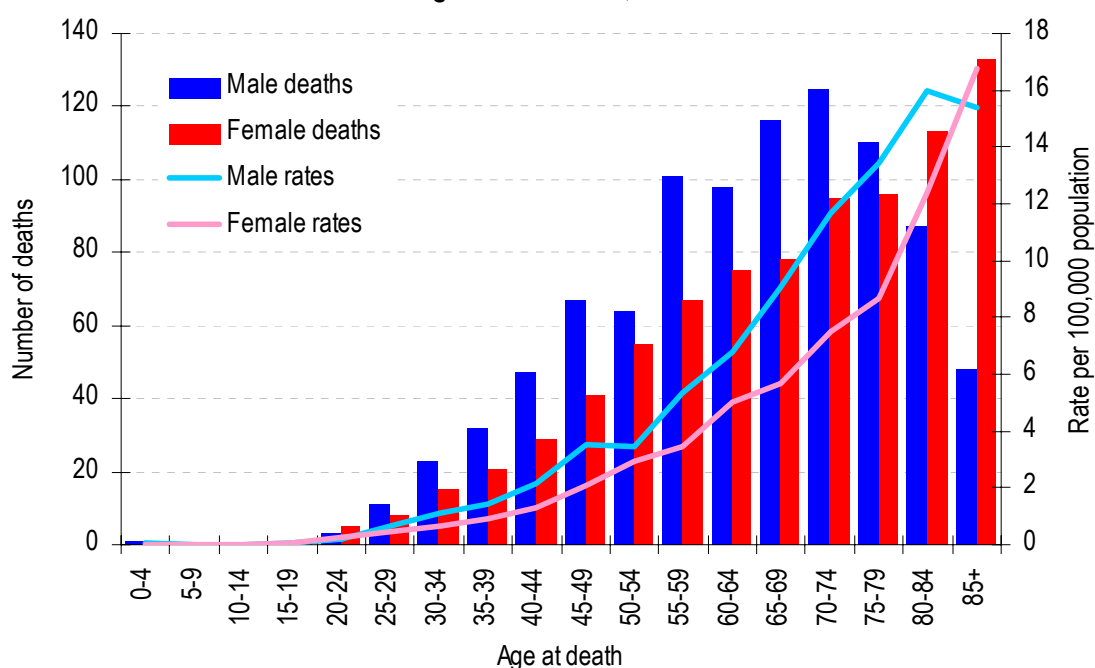
MORTALITY

In 2003 there were 1,766 deaths from malignant melanoma and 514 deaths from non-melanoma skin cancer in the UK. Deaths from malignant melanoma account for 1% of all deaths from cancer. Over 55% of deaths from malignant melanoma are in the over 65s.

Table Two: Number of deaths and age standardised mortality rates, malignant melanoma, by country and sex, UK, 2003

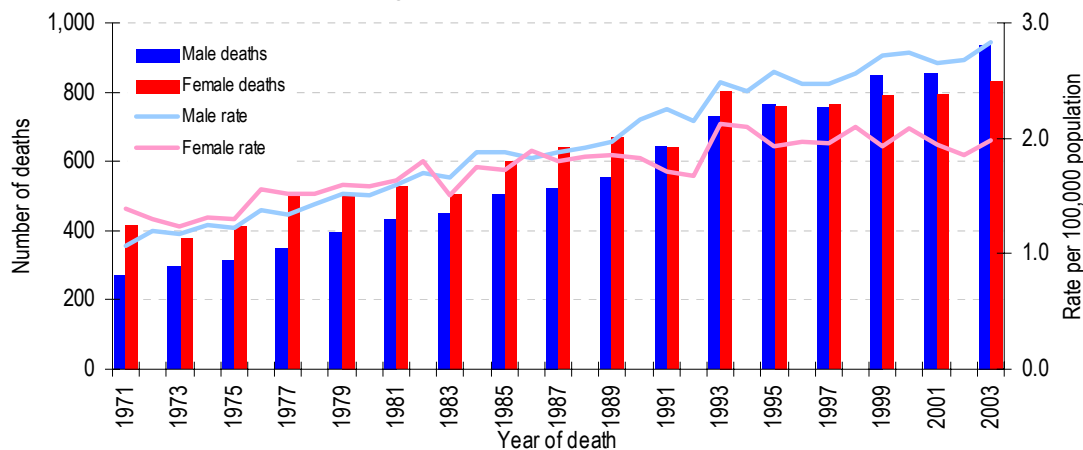
	England	Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland	UK
Number of deaths					
Males	780	53	78	23	934
Females	686	61	68	17	832
Persons	1,466	114	146	40	1,766
Age-standardised rate[†]					
Males	2.8	3.3	2.8	2.8	2.8
Females	1.9	3.0	1.9	1.6	2.0
Persons	2.4	3.1	2.3	2.1	2.4

Figure Four: Number of deaths and age-specific mortality, by sex, malignant melanoma, UK 2003



Increases in mortality rates reflect increases in incidence, however, improvements in survival have meant that the increase has been less than that for incidence.

Figure Five: Number of deaths and age standardised[†] mortality rates, by sex, malignant melanoma, UK, 1971-2003



*national data on non-melanoma skin cancer are known to be incomplete.

[†] to the European population

Incidence:

England – Cancer Statistics Registrations, Series MB1, National Statistics

Wales – Cancer Incidence in Wales 1992-2001, Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (2002)

Scotland – Information and Statistics Division website: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/isd/>

Northern Ireland – Northern Ireland Cancer Registry <http://www.qub.ac.uk/nicr/intro.htm>

Survival:

England and Wales – Coleman et al, Cancer Survival Trends in England and Wales 1971-1995, Deprivation and NHS Region, The Stationery Office (1999), - Coleman et al, Trends in socioeconomic inequalities in cancer survival in England and Wales up to 2001, BJC Volume 90

Scotland – Information and Statistics Division website: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/isd/>

Northern Ireland – Survival of Cancer Patients in Northern Ireland 1993-1996, Northern Ireland Cancer Registry, Belfast (2001)

Mortality:

England and Wales - Mortality Statistics Cause DH2, National Statistics

Scotland – Information and Statistics Division website: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/isd/>

Northern Ireland - Registrar General for Northern Ireland Annual Report <http://www.groni.gov.uk>