

Strict embargo: 00.01 hrs BST
Wednesday, 27 August, 2025

Not peer-reviewed

Statistical analysis

People

OVER SIX MILLION NEW CANCER CASES IN ENGLAND BY 2040

- New projections suggest that a person will be diagnosed with cancer every two minutes by 2040 – in the 1970s, it was every four minutes.
- Some of the most common cancers are projected to reach record high cases*
- A coalition of more than 60 cancer charities – known as One Cancer Voice – have united to urge the UK Government to deliver a bold, fully funded National Cancer Plan for England to save and improve more people's lives

New analysis shows that by 2040, around 6.3 million new cancer cases are expected across England.

In the 1970s, someone was diagnosed with cancer every four minutes. By 2040, it's projected to be every two minutes – around 1,110 people a day.

Over the last 15 years there have been 5.5 million cases**. The new figures suggest there will be 14.2% more cases over the next 15 years.

Some of the most common cancers are expected to reach all-time highs, including:

- Prostate cancer (1,050,000)
- Breast cancer (906,000)
- Lung cancer (821,000)

There are also projected to be over 63,000 cases in children and young people aged 0-24.

Despite progress in survival – which has doubled since the 1970s, the rising number of cases threatens to add additional demands on an already overstretched NHS. Without decisive action, England risks falling behind comparable countries in cancer outcomes.

With a National Cancer Plan for England expected later this year, the One Cancer Voice coalition has outlined six essential tests the plan must meet to take England from world lagging to world leading on tackling cancer:

1. Pledge to meet all cancer wait times by 2029 - the end of this Parliament
2. Set a new earlier diagnosis target, improve screening programmes and support primary care to reduce later stage cancer diagnosis

3. Introduce strong prevention policies, tackling major risk factors
4. Ensure every patient receives the best possible treatment and inequalities are addressed
5. Improve access to clinical trials for cancer patients, positioning the NHS as the world leader for cancer research and innovation
6. Support everyone to live well with and beyond cancer with practical and emotional support embedded in NHS cancer care

The charities are also clear that the plan needs to be fully funded. Without this, the tests cannot be met.

Cancer Research UK's chief executive and One Cancer Voice representative, Michelle Mitchell, said:

“Nearly one in two of us will be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime - everyone will be impacted by the disease, whether they receive a diagnosis themselves, or have a friend, family member or loved one who does.

“The National Cancer Plan for England could be a defining moment. If the UK Government delivers an ambitious fully funded strategy, we could save more lives and transform cancer outcomes in England, propelling our country from world lagging to world leading when it comes to tackling this disease.

“Meeting these six tests will show how serious the UK Government is about improving cancer outcomes. We've seen progress before – now is the time to act again. and make a difference for cancer patients.

In the first six months of 2025, over 50,000 cancer patients across England waited longer than they should to start cancer treatment****. The charities warn that without bold reform and investment, delays will continue.

One Cancer Voice is calling for public awareness campaigns to boost symptom awareness, support for GPs to aid earlier diagnosis, and improvements to screening programmes.

Preventing cancer cases in the first place is also crucial. Tobacco remains the biggest cause of cancer and premature death in the UK – charities are urging the government to pass the Tobacco and Vapes Bill into law as quickly as possible, which could prevent future generations from ever smoking.

Other policies will also be essential to shifting the NHS from treatment to prevention, including stronger restrictions on marketing of unhealthy food and drink to help tackle record obesity rates, and boosting HPV vaccination efforts to help eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem by 2040.

Former National Cancer Director at the Department of Health and Chair of the National Screening Committee, Professor Sir Mike Richards, said:

“Our previous NHS Cancer Plan was instrumental in improving cancer outcomes, and this one gives us a huge opportunity to make England one of the best countries in the world for cancer survival.

“But to make this happen it’s essential that the plan has consistent funding, so that the changes we know will save lives from cancer are able to be introduced. This will save money in the long term and ensure a better future for generations to come.”

ENDS

One Cancer Voice spokespeople and case studies are available for interview. For media enquiries, contact George Dean in the Cancer Research UK press office on George.Dean@cancer.org.uk / 020 3469 6654, or out of hours, on 020 3469 8301.

Notes to editor

*Cases refers to individual diagnoses rather than individual people. This method does not adjust for multiple diagnoses for the same individual over the modelled period.

**Based on 5,515,530 new cancer diagnoses between 2003-2005 to 2018-2019, 2021, compared with projected 6,298,554 new cancer diagnoses between 2025-2040.

***Whilst the UK has made improvements in cancer survival in recent decades, analysis from the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership (ICBP) shows that the UK lags behind many countries with comparable levels of wealth, healthcare systems and robust data including Australia, Norway and Canada.

For example, England and Denmark had among the worst 5-year net survival rates for rectal cancer in 1995-1999, at 47.6% and 48.1% respectively. Though both countries improved their survival, England remained near the bottom of the league table at 62.2% (2010-2014, a change of 14.6 percentage points), whereas Denmark now has the third highest 5-year net survival rate amongst ICBP regions at 69.1% (2010-2014, a change of 21.0 percentage points).

****The NHS in England aims to start treatment for 85% of cancer patients within 62 days of an urgent suspected cancer referral. However, this target has not been met since 2015 – a decade ago. The most recent data shows that in June 2025, 67.1% of cancer patients were treated within this timeframe.

Table ranking cancer cases by cancer type in England by 2040

Ranking	Cancer type	Cases between now and 2040
1.	Prostate cancer	1,050,000

2.	Breast cancer	906,000
3.	Lung cancer	821,000
4.	Bowel cancer	609,000
5.	Melanoma skin cancer	323,000
6.	Kidney cancer	250,000
7.	Head and neck cancer	202,000
8.	Pancreatic cancer	201,000
9.	Leukaemia	186,000
10.	Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	184,000
11.	Brain, other CNS and intracranial tumours	178,000
12.	Uterine cancer	150,000
13.	Oesophageal cancer	147,000
14.	Bladder cancer	133,000
15.	Ovarian cancer	122,000
16.	Liver cancer	119,000
17.	Other cancers	117,000
18.	Myeloma	102,000
19.	Cancer of unknown primary	96,900
20.	Stomach cancer	85,000
21.	Thyroid cancer	76,600
22.	Small intestine cancer	48,900
23.	Cervical cancer	41,100
24.	Hodgkin lymphoma	36,500
25.	Gallbladder cancer	33,800
26.	Mesothelioma	33,300
27.	Testicular cancer	32,000
28.	Anal cancer	29,500
29.	Eye cancer	24,500
30.	Vulval cancer	22,700
31.	Penile cancer	13,800
32.	Bone sarcoma	6,500
33.	Vaginal cancer	2,900

National Cancer Plan tests

One Cancer Voice has outlined six tests the National Cancer Plan has to meet if England is to lead the world in tackling cancer. It must:

1. Prevention

Deliver a clear plan to prevent cancer, including action on tobacco, obesity, HPV, alcohol, and genetic risk.

2. Access

Meet all cancer waiting times, address cancer inequalities and ensure everyone can receive the best possible cancer care, no matter what their age, where they live or who they are.

3. Earlier Diagnosis

Outline a renewed commitment to the earlier diagnosis of cancer, and activities that support this including; public campaigns, implementation of evidence-based screening programmes and supporting primary care/GPs.

4. Treatment

Ensure all patients receive optimal (or best practice) treatments, including those that extend life for those living with incurable cancers.

5. Research and development

Improve patient access to relevant cancer clinical trials and make the NHS the world leading platform for cancer R&D.

6. Living with and beyond cancer

Deliver person-centred care that tackles unmet needs and improves the quality of life of every person living with cancer.

Inequalities

Across cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment, huge problems remain with inequalities. A recent report from Cancer Research UK highlighted that cancer death rates are almost 60% higher in the UK's most deprived areas, with around 28,400 cancer deaths each year linked to socioeconomic inequality. One Cancer Voice is calling for the National Cancer Plan to address cancer inequalities with targeted action to ensure everyone can receive a cancer diagnosis and treatment as quickly as possible.

Children and young people and cancer

Between now and 2040, it's projected that around 63,300 new cancer cases will be diagnosed in children and young people aged 0-24 in England. It's essential that the National Cancer Plan delivers distinct actions for children and young people's cancers, alongside adults, to address the unique aspects of cancer in younger people

For information about what the government needs to do to improve the lives of children and young people affected by cancer, see [here](#) and [here](#).

One Cancer Voice

One Cancer Voice is a coalition of cancer charities working together to improve outcomes for people affected by cancer. The One Cancer Voice members supporting this work include:

1. Action Bladder Cancer UK
2. Action Kidney Cancer
3. Alike
4. AMMF – The Cholangiocarcinoma Charity
5. Anthony Nolan
6. Blood Cancer Alliance
7. Blood Cancer UK
8. Bowel Cancer UK
9. Brain Tumour Research
10. Brainstrust
11. Breast Cancer Now
12. Breast Cancer UK
13. British Liver Trust
14. Cancer52
15. Cancer Care Map
16. Cancer Research UK
17. CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association
18. CLL Support Association
19. CoppaFeel!
20. Eve Appeal
21. Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust
22. Hope for Tomorrow
23. Kidney Cancer UK
24. Kidney Research UK
25. Less Survivable Cancers Taskforce
26. Leukaemia Care
27. Leukemia UK
28. Lobular Breast Cancer UK
29. Lymphoma Action
30. Macmillan Cancer Support
31. Maggie's
32. Make 2nds Count
33. Melanoma Focus
34. Melanoma UK
35. Mesothelioma UK
36. Myeloma UK
37. Neuroblastoma UK

38. Neuroendocrine Cancer UK
39. North West Cancer Research
40. Oracle Cancer Trust
41. OUTpatients
42. Ovacome
43. Ovarian Cancer Action
44. Pancreatic Cancer UK
45. Penny Brohn UK
46. Prostate Cancer UK
47. Radiotherapy UK
48. Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation
49. Sarcoma UK
50. Shine Cancer Support
51. Solving Kids Cancer
52. Target Ovarian Cancer
53. Teenage Cancer Trust
54. The Brain Tumor Charity
55. The Eve Appeal
56. The Royal College of Radiologists
57. The Urology Foundation
58. Trekstock
59. Walk the Walk Worldwide
60. World Cancer Research Fund
61. Yorkshire Cancer Research
62. Young Lives Vs Cancer
63. Young Tounges