

Chapter
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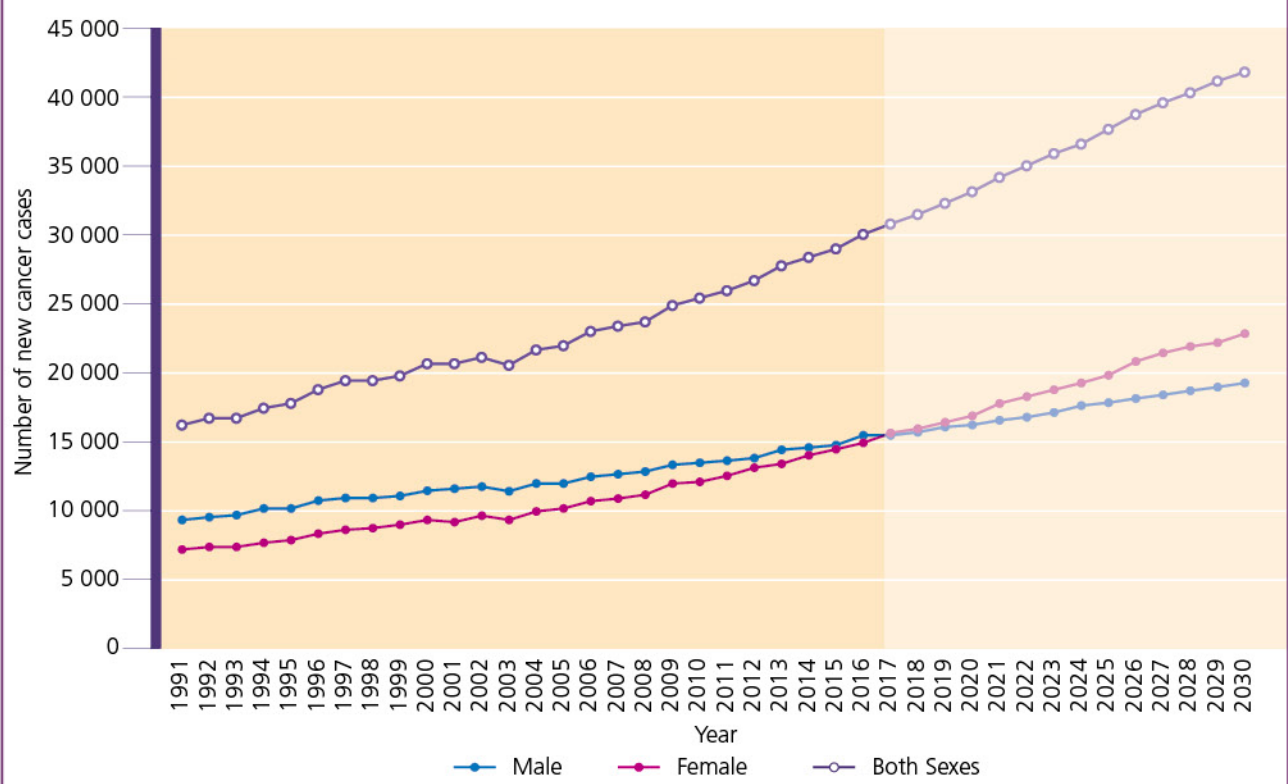
Cancer in Hong Kong

Cancer Epidemiology

- 1.1 Cancer is one of the major non-communicable diseases (“NCD”) in Hong Kong. The cancer incidence has been on a rising trend, increasing at an average rate of about 2.9% per annum in the past decade. The number of new cancer cases in Hong Kong hit a historical high of 31 468 in 2016.
- 1.2 A total of 17 030 cancers are currently estimated to have occurred in males and 16 250 in females in 2018, giving a male to female ratio of 1.05 to 1.¹ A more pronounced increase in cancer numbers, commensurate with the increase in the projected female population, will very likely reverse the current gender difference in the number of newly diagnosed cancers in the coming few years. This will be particularly obvious in the middle age groups in which new cases of cancer in women will substantially outnumber men.
- 1.3 With the prevailing trends in incidence and population structure, the annual number of new cancer cases is projected to increase by around 35% to more than 42 000 by 2030 from current level (Figure 1).

¹ Due to the time required for cancer data collection, compilation, analysis and quality control, there is a time gap of 22 months in the presentation of data (which is a common phenomenon recognised in other countries). The number of new cancer cases in 2018 is estimated based on actual incidence data in 2016. The numbers for each cancer type are estimated by summing up the products of the age-specific incidence rates in 2016 and the number of population in the same age subgroup in 2018. All estimates are rounded to the nearest 5.

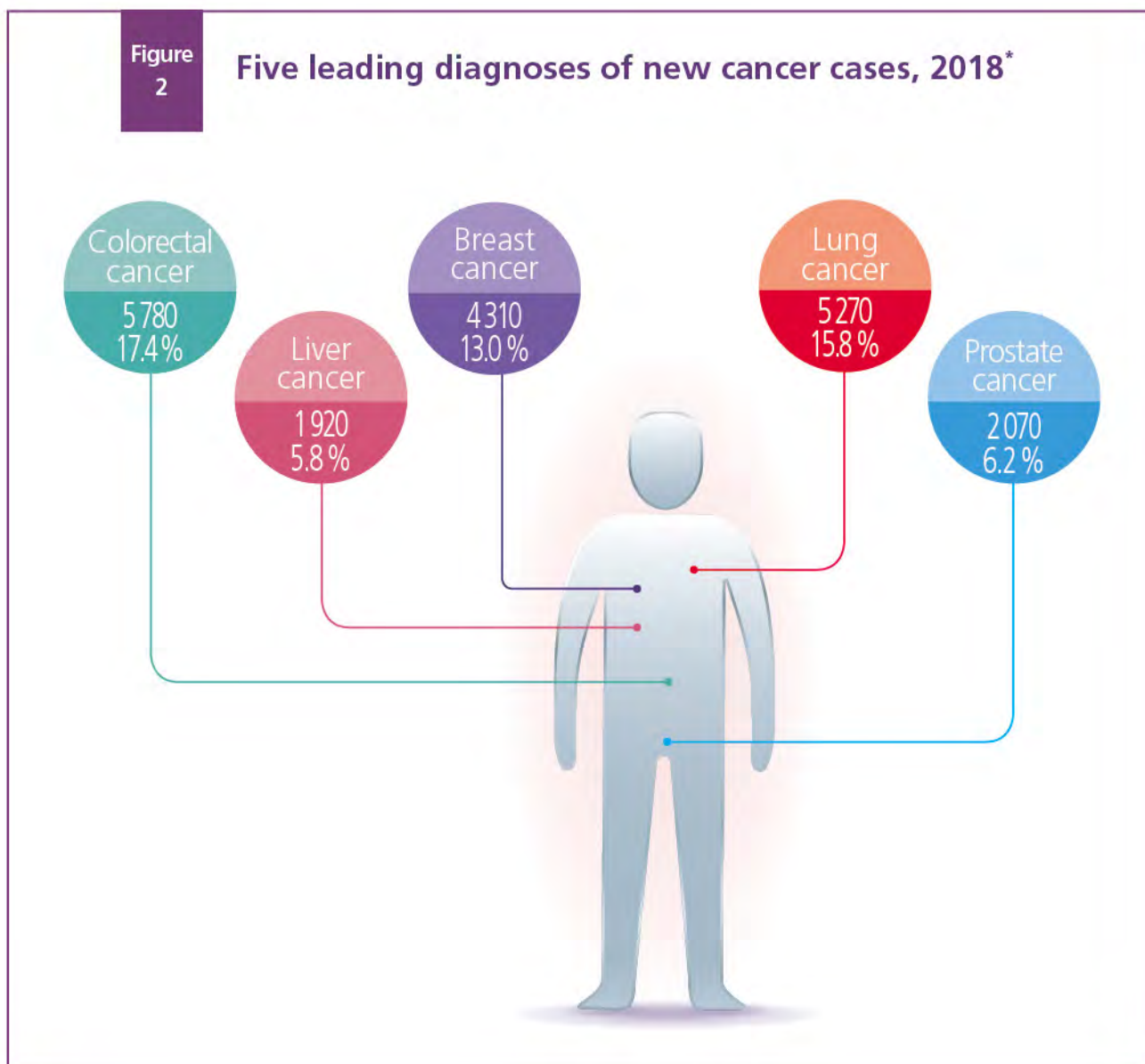
Figure 1 Number of new cancer cases and projections to 2030²



Source: Hong Kong Cancer Registry

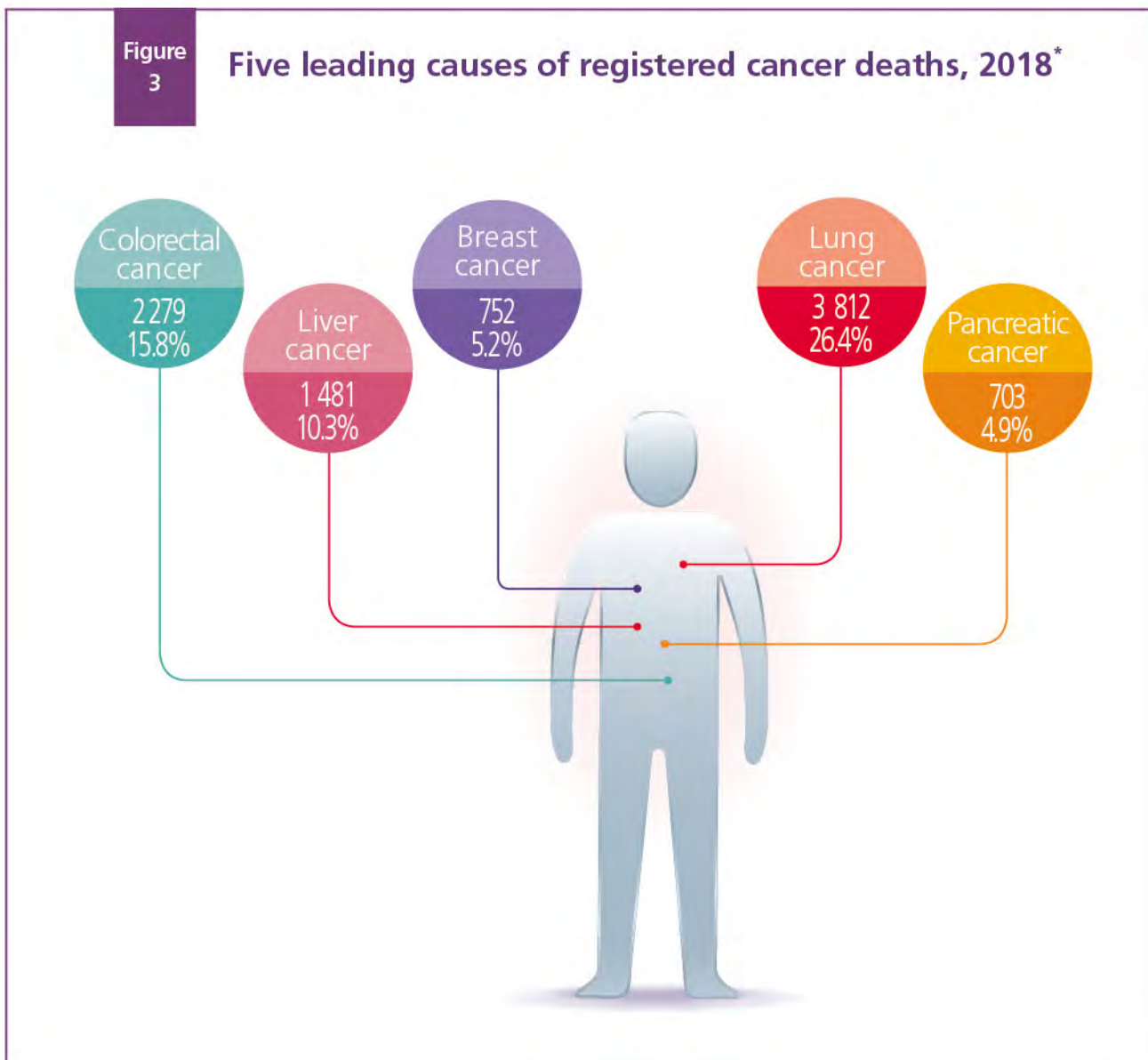
² Due to the classification of children and adolescent cancers (age<20) is different from that of adult cancers; and, typically, non-melanoma skin cancers are mostly curable with early diagnosis and the registrations for non-melanoma skin cancers are likely to be less complete and less accurate than other cancer sites across time, these two categories are excluded in the projection of cancer incidence.

- 1.4 The five most frequent cancers diagnosed for both genders combined in 2018 are estimated to be colorectal cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer and liver cancer. These five leading cancers comprised over half (58.1%) of all new cancer cases (Figure 2). More details of these five cancers are at **Annex 1**.



* Provisional figures

- 1.5 Cancer is the top killer in Hong Kong. In 2018, cancer claimed 14 446 lives, accounting for about one third of the total deaths in the local population. Among all, lung cancer, colorectal cancer and liver cancer topped the list and made up 52.4% of all cancer deaths (Figure 3).*

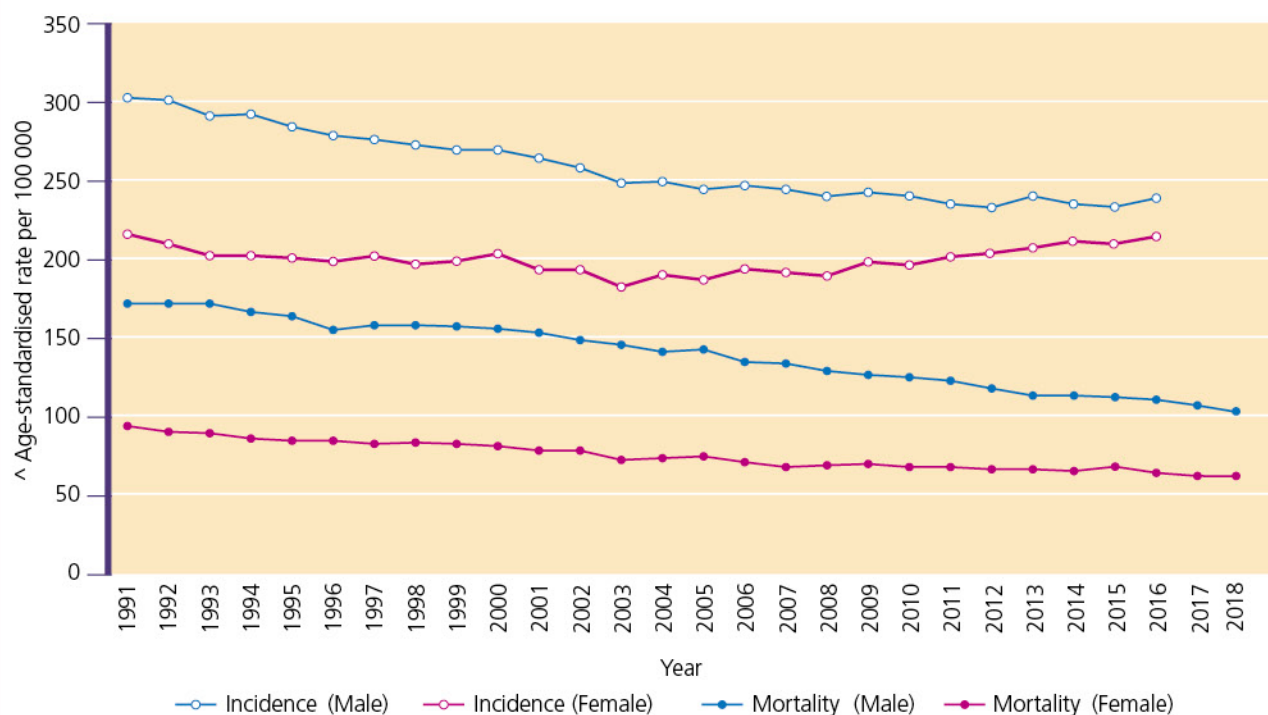


* Provisional figures

- 1.6 Cancer is primarily a disease of older people. Almost two-thirds of newly diagnosed cancers projected in 2018 and 80% of cancer deaths in 2018 related to those aged 60 and above.* The median age at diagnosis of cancer in 2016 was 67 years for male and 61 years for female. The median age at death due to cancer was 72 years for both male and female in 2018.*
- 1.7 While the number of new cancer cases has continued to increase largely as a result of a growing and ageing population, a steady decline in the age-standardised cancer incidence rate has been observed for men over the past quarter century, with a reversal of decreasing trend for women observed in the past ten years or so (Figure 4).
- 1.8 Both the age-standardised mortality rate for men and that for women had a downward trend during the above period but the rate in women appears to be levelling off in the past ten years (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Age-standardised incidence and mortality rates of all cancers by sex



^ Rates are standardised to the Segi's world standard population (Segi, 1960)

Sources: Hong Kong Cancer Registry, Department of Health and Census and Statistics Department

* Provisional figures

- 1.9 Based on figures on inpatient discharges and deaths collected by the Department of Health (“DH”), a rough estimation of the relative proportion of cancer care provided in the public versus private sector can be made. In 2017, about 10% of all recorded inpatient discharges and deaths were related to cancer. There were around 200 500 inpatient discharges and deaths from the Hospital Authority (“HA”) hospitals due to cancer and the corresponding figures from private hospitals were over 22 600. The relative proportion is therefore about 9 to 1.

Governance, Partnerships and Stakeholders

- 1.10 Hong Kong has in place an effective infrastructure that has stood the test of time to provide cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, support and care services as well as surveillance and research activities.
- 1.11 Apart from the Food and Health Bureau (“FHB”) which oversees the overall formulation of policies and allocation of resources, the Cancer Coordinating Committee (“CCC”), chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, advises on the planning and development of cancer prevention and control strategies. Implementation of the policies is supported by –
- (a) the Hong Kong Cancer Registry (“HKCaR”), the Government-recognised agency tasked to provide wide-spectrum surveillance data, including through partnership with private healthcare providers, to sustain a complete population-based cancer registry;
 - (b) the DH, the Government’s health adviser and agency to execute healthcare policies and statutory functions;
 - (c) the HA, at which nearly 90% of new cancer patients had attended in Hong Kong within the first six months of cancer diagnosis; and
 - (d) the Research Office (“RO”) of the FHB, which administers and disburses fund to support health and medical research including cancer research.

Annex 2 provides more background on the above players in the public sector.

- 1.12 While the Government has a leading role in taking the agenda forward, successful prevention and control of cancers relies on collaborative efforts by everyone in the community. Creation of partnerships will enhance effectiveness through mutually beneficial relationships, and build upon trust and complementary capacities of partners from different disciplines and sectors including public, private, academia, professionals and non-governmental organisations (“NGOs”).
- 1.13 The involvement of stakeholders of all related sectors including patients, families, carers and patient support groups and at all levels of the decision-making process, is equally important to enable active participation and commitment of key players for the benefit of the programme. The Government will enhance communication with and engagement of relevant stakeholders including the medical sector, NGOs and patients groups in implementing this cancer strategy.
- 1.14 This is the first cancer strategy of Hong Kong for implementation from 2020 onwards. The Government will conduct review of the Strategy at a regular interval, targeting at the achievement of the expected outcomes.

