BREAST CANCER IN THE UK 2026: KEY STATS



UK-wide incidence:

Almost **1 in 3** new cancers diagnosed in women will be breast cancer.[1]

1 in 7 women will develop it in their lifetime.[2]

EVERY 9 MINUTES a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. That's around **60,000** women each year.[3]

We don't know exactly how many people are living with metastatic breast cancer in the UK, but it's estimated that there are around **61,000**.[4]

We estimate that **1 in 4** women will experience a **recurrence**.[5]

Around **69%** of people in the UK **know someone who's been diagnosed** with breast cancer.[6]

UK-wide survival:

11,200 women and **90 men** die from breast cancer each year. Almost all deaths from breast cancer are caused by **metastatic breast cancer**.

EVERY 47 MINUTES someone dies from breast cancer.[7]

Breast cancer is the **biggest killer of working-age women** in the UK.[8]

Breast cancer risk factors:

80% of breast cancer cases are in women **over 50**.[9]

5–10% of women with breast cancer are thought to have an **inherited altered gene** that increases their risk.[10]

Women with an altered **BRCA1** and **BRCA2** gene have a **72%** and a **69%** risk respectively of developing breast cancer.[11]

Around **23%**[1] of breast cancer cases could be prevented by people making some **healthy changes** to their lifestyle behaviours.[12]

Women from some ethnic minority groups are more likely to be diagnosed at a **later stage** and have **poorer outcomes**.

Diagnosis:

60% of breast cancer cases in England are diagnosed because women **identify unusual changes in their breast and report these to their GP**.[13]

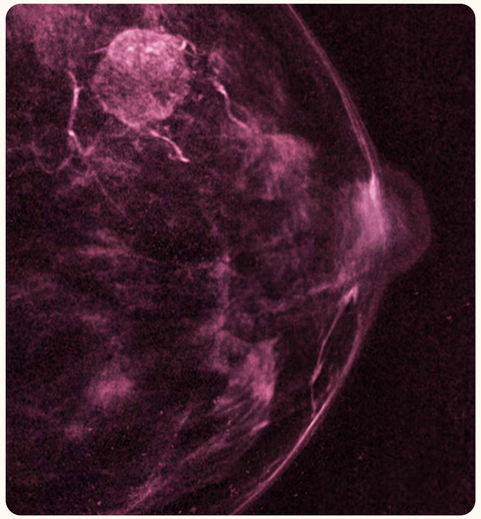
Treatment:

Of breast cancer patients in England in 2022:[14]

81% received a **tumour resection**

62% received **radiotherapy**

36% received **chemotherapy**



The impact of breast cancer:

Breast cancer can affect every area of a person's life, including family and friends around them.

The effects often continue long after treatment ends. People who finished hospital-based treatment and struggled with their mental health said their top worry was their cancer coming back or spreading.[15]

Treatment side effects can also affect people's closest relationships, with **98%** of women surveyed saying they made **being sexually intimate difficult**.[16]

For people with metastatic breast cancer, the burden is even greater. For example, **88% reported tiredness** and **70% memory problems**, compared with **83%** and **61%** of people with primary breast cancer.[17]

ENDNOTES

[1] Cancer Research UK. Cancer statistics data hub. Available at: cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/breast-cancer (accessed August 2026).

[2] Cancer Research UK. Breast cancer risk. Available at: cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/breast-cancer/risk-factors (accessed August 2026).

[3] NHS Digital (2025). Cancer Registration Statistics, England, 2023. Public Health Scotland (2025). Cancer incidence in Scotland. Public Health Wales (2025) Cancer incidence in Wales. Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (2026) 1993-2023. Average figures 2021-2023, with 2019, 2021-22 for Wales.

[4] Based on findings from Palmieri, C et al (2022). Estimated Prevalence of Metastatic Breast Cancer in England, 2016-2021. JAMA Network Open, 5(12), e2248069 doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.48069. This paper estimates 57,215 people living with secondary breast cancer in England in 2020/21. Combined with requested data from Public Health Scotland (2025) estimating 4,202 people living with secondary breast cancer at the end of 2023.

[5] Breast Cancer Now calculation, Recurrence rates vary by tumour subtype, stage at diagnosis, and time since treatment. The “around one in four” figure is a long-run average drawn from UK cancer registry data and published research (Cancer Research UK). In line with international estimates that sit between 20-30% risk of distant recurrence

[6] OnePoll (2026). Unpublished report prepared for Breast Cancer Now. Online survey of 2000 UK adults (nationally representative on the basis of age, gender, and region), fieldwork: 6th and 10th March 2026. All participants are double-opted in to take part in research and are paid an amount depending on the length and complexity of the survey. Available at: Almost one million people are living with or beyond breast cancer and set to rise | Breast Cancer Now

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[8] Office of National Statistics (2026). Deaths registered summary statistics, England and Wales: 2025. National Records of Scotland (2025). Vital events reference tables chapter 6, cause of death, Scotland, 2024. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2025). Registrar General Annual Report. 'Working age’ defined as 20-64. In Wales, heart disease and trachea, bronchus and lung cancer slightly overtakes breast cancer. In Scotland and Wales, heart disease slightly overtakes, but breast cancer is still one of the top killers.

[9] Cancer Research UK. Cancer Statistics Data Hub. Average Number of New Cases per Year and Age-Specific Incidence Rates per 100,000 Females and Males, UK, 2019, 2021-2022. Available at:crukcancerintelligence.shinyapps.io/CancerStatsDataHub (accessed August 2026).

[10] A beginner’s guide to BRCA1 and BRCA2. The Royal Marsden. NHS Foundation Trust.

[11] Breast Cancer Now. Family history of breast cancer: Managing your risk. Available at: breastcancernow.org/download-and-order-publications/family-history-of-breast-cancer-managing-your-risk-bcn244. BCN calculation: median number for each.

[12] Brown, K.F. et al. (2018). The fraction of cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 2015. British Journal of Cancer 118, 1130–1141. National Institute for Health and Care Research (2023). Breast cancer: Why we need to understand breast cancer risk. Available at: evidence.nihr.ac.uk/collection/breast-cancer-risk-why-we-need-to-understand-it

[13] Breast Cancer Now analysis of Rapid Cancer Registration Data: Incidence and treatment dashboard (2025) Sum of USC and GP referrals in 2025. Available at: nhsdndrs.shinyapps.io/rcrd

[14] Cancer treatments. National Disease Registration Service. Available at: digital.nhs.uk/ndrs/data/data-outputs/cancer-data-hub/cancer-treatments (accessed August 2026).

[15] King R et al (2024). Psychosocial experiences of breast cancer survivors: a metareview. J Cancer Surviv. 18(1):84-123. DOI: 10.1007/s11764-023-01336-x; NHS England (2022). Cancer Quality of Survey. Available at: digital.nhs.uk/ndrs/data/data-outputs/cancerdata-hub/cancer-quality-of-life-survey; DJS Research (2023). Support needs research study; Coles C et al (2024). The Lancet Breast Cancer Commission. DOI: doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)00747-5

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[17] Coles C et al (2024). The Lancet Breast Cancer Commission. The Lancet. 403(10439):1895–1950. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(24)00747-5; Ng S et al (2025). Hidden costs and unmet supportive care needs among individuals with experience of breast cancer and their carers in the United Kingdom. BJC Reports 3:55. DOI: 10.1038/s44276-025-00172-z

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