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Ministry of Health & Mass Media

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Growing Global Cancer Burden - Part I

*This is the first article of two in a series on
“Growing Global Cancer Burden”*

Cancer has become one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Every country, regardless of its income level, now faces rising numbers of cancer cases and deaths. The growing cancer burden results from a combination of factors, such as ageing populations, lifestyle changes, infections, and exposure to environmental risks. Cancer brings not just medical problems but also emotional, social, and financial challenges for individuals and families. Health systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries, are struggling to meet the growing demand for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

According WHO in 2022, the world recorded approximately **20 million new cancer cases** and **9.7 million deaths** caused by cancer. Around **53.5 million people** were living within five years of a cancer diagnosis, representing those in treatment, recovery, or long-term care. The lifetime risk of developing cancer is now **1 in 5**, while the lifetime risk of dying from it is **1 in 9 for men** and **1 in 12 for women**. These statistics show that cancer is not only a major cause of death but also one of the biggest ongoing burdens on global health and society. Following, explain it in a nutshell.

Global Cancer Statistics (2022)

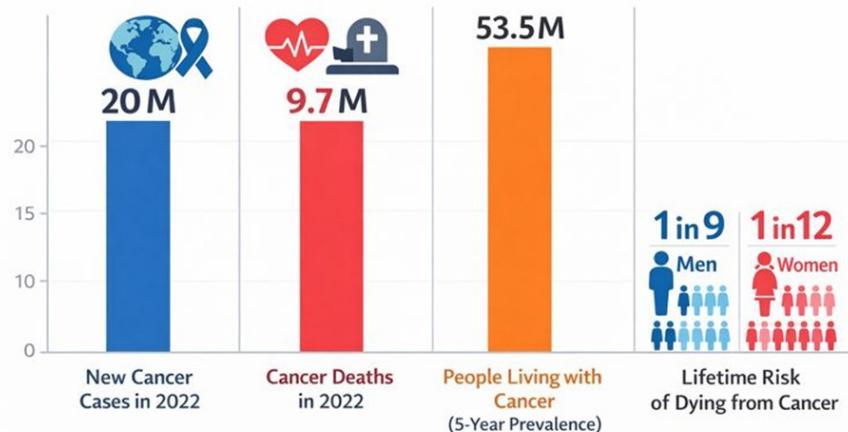


Photo credit goes to: Global Cancer Observatory (GCO), International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), 2025

1. Growing Global Cancer Burden – Part I
2. Summary of selected notifiable diseases reported (01st – 07th Nov 2025)
3. Surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases & AFP (01st – 07th Nov 2025)

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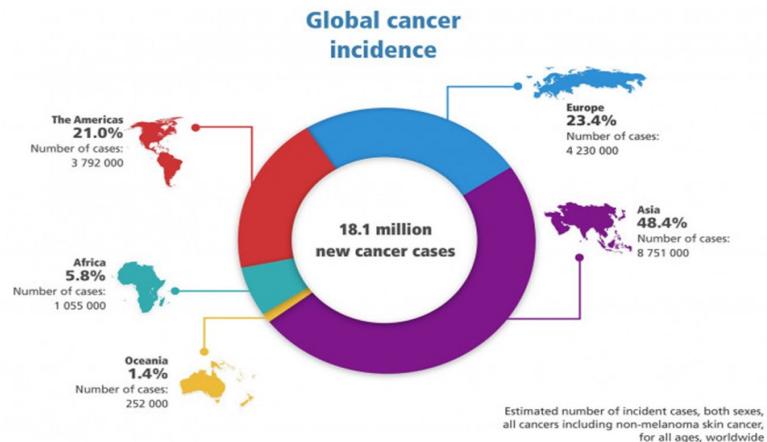


Photo credit goes to: Global Cancer Observatory (GCO), International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), 2025

The chart illustrates the **global incidence of cancer** across different continents in terms of the percentage of cases and absolute numbers. In 2025, an estimated **18.1 million new cancer cases** were reported worldwide, including all types of cancers (both sexes, all ages, including non-melanoma skin cancer).

The increasing number of cases can be explained by several global trends: population growth, longer life expectancy, and greater exposure to risk factors such as tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, physical inactivity, and pollution. Together, these forces are shaping cancer trends across all regions. Cancer is responsible for about **20% of premature deaths** from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Projections suggest that new cancer cases could increase by **nearly 87% by 2050**, if current patterns continue. Among men, oral, lung, prostate, and digestive tract cancers are most common, while breast, cervical, and uterine cancers dominate among women.

The *IARC Global Cancer Observatory* shows that ten cancer types make up about two-thirds of all new cases and deaths globally. In 2022:

- **Lung cancer** was the most common, with **2.5 million new cases** (12.4% of all cancers).
- **Breast cancer** came next, with **2.3 million cases** (11.6%).
- **Colorectal cancer** followed, with **1.9 million cases** (9.6%).
- **Prostate cancer** ranked fourth with **1.5 million** (7.3%).
- **Stomach cancer** accounted for **970,000 new cases** (4.9%).

When looking at deaths:

- **Lung cancer** caused the most deaths (**1.8 million**, 18.7%).
- **Colorectal cancer** caused **900,000 deaths** (9.3%).
- **Liver cancer** led to **760,000 deaths** (7.8%).
- **Breast cancer** caused **670,000 deaths** (6.9%).
- **Stomach cancer** caused **660,000 deaths** (6.8%).

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References:

1. <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-02-2024-global-cancer-burden-growing--amidst-mounting-need-for-services>
2. <https://www.who.int/srilanka/news/detail/05-02-2025-world-cancer-day-2025--the-world-cancer-day-theme-2025-2027--united-by-unique>

Table 1: Selected notifiable diseases reported by Medical Officers of Health 01st-07th Nov 2025 (45th Week)

RDHS	Dengue Fever		Dysentery		Encephalitis		En. Fever		F. Poisoning		Leptospirosis		Typhus F.		Viral Hep.		H. Rabies		Chickenpox		Meningitis		Leishmania-		Tuberculosis		WRCD	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	C**			
Colombo	184	9966	0	32	1	18	0	15	0	36	8	398	0	5	0	32	0	0	15	526	3	70	1	6	24	1799	94	100
Gampaha	128	6450	0	48	0	33	0	4	1	152	14	746	0	11	0	18	0	0	7	763	2	165	0	41	16	1035	100	100
Kalutara	27	2155	0	38	0	6	0	20	0	99	2	564	0	3	1	8	0	0	9	783	1	47	0	3	1	506	84	95
Kandy	56	3876	0	46	0	3	0	8	1	57	4	272	0	48	0	10	0	0	10	564	0	23	3	71	11	571	57	100
Matale	12	1136	0	25	0	3	0	2	1	87	5	231	0	6	0	9	0	0	1	129	0	9	7	320	4	134	100	100
Nuwara Eliya	5	314	2	80	0	6	0	7	0	76	6	179	1	57	0	9	0	0	5	300	0	36	0	0	3	254	92	100
Galle	27	1887	1	56	0	9	1	9	0	95	10	771	0	78	0	13	0	2	11	715	1	152	0	3	8	461	95	100
Hambantota	18	818	0	41	0	7	0	2	0	37	4	337	0	30	0	16	0	0	19	310	4	32	3	311	1	128	100	100
Matara	17	1398	0	17	0	3	0	1	0	25	8	430	1	16	0	21	0	1	13	410	2	49	0	103	1	154	94	100
Jaffna	54	1169	4	88	0	3	1	19	0	46	3	145	12	474	0	3	0	2	11	315	2	33	0	0	6	189	100	93
Kilinochchi	6	95	0	14	0	1	0	4	0	7	3	67	2	14	1	2	0	0	0	10	0	1	0	2	0	43	100	100
Mannar	6	161	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	32	0	18	0	2	0	0	0	19	0	15	0	9	0	44	100	100
Vavuniya	1	81	0	10	0	0	0	1	0	40	1	84	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	47	2	23	0	20	0	55	100	100
Mullaitivu	0	55	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	26	0	55	0	10	0	1	0	0	0	32	0	8	1	5	2	33	83	100
Batticaloa	29	1682	1	131	0	16	0	4	0	202	0	110	0	2	0	27	0	0	8	183	0	33	0	1	1	124	86	100
Ampara	7	231	1	55	0	11	0	3	0	43	4	214	0	3	0	13	0	1	8	224	1	53	0	24	2	58	71	100
Trincomalee	12	963	1	42	0	4	0	2	0	78	3	131	0	9	0	6	0	1	4	129	0	12	0	9	4	121	100	100
Kurunegala	13	1445	1	44	1	19	0	2	3	66	33	681	0	26	1	9	0	1	22	826	2	159	8	558	15	343	86	100
Puttalam	23	591	0	34	0	3	0	0	0	15	9	282	0	36	0	4	0	1	4	147	1	99	0	29	8	185	92	100
Anuradhapura	3	495	0	33	0	6	0	3	1	44	6	338	0	25	0	12	0	2	0	308	0	60	7	706	1	279	76	100
Polonnaruwa	3	319	0	16	1	7	0	1	1	143	2	250	0	1	0	25	0	0	2	189	1	24	8	424	4	87	88	90
Badulla	14	731	1	36	1	15	0	4	0	11	5	282	1	39	5	81	0	0	9	382	2	79	0	65	3	255	81	100
Monaragala	7	767	3	33	0	5	0	1	0	19	13	495	0	39	1	60	0	0	3	227	0	53	1	214	5	138	91	100
Ratnapura	47	4351	3	103	0	10	0	4	0	72	17	1407	1	33	0	18	0	2	14	424	1	102	0	203	6	356	100	100
Kegalle	17	1326	1	56	0	13	0	10	0	42	11	722	0	15	0	20	0	0	12	838	2	121	2	33	4	266	82	100
Kalmunai	3	377	1	46	0	7	0	0	0	52	2	108	0	2	0	5	0	1	6	241	4	58	0	1	1	131	92	100
SRILANKA	719	42839	20	1137	4	208	2	128	8	1573	174	9331	18	1010	9	424	0	14	193	9041	31	1516	41	3161	131	7749	90	99

Source: Weekly Returns of Communicable Diseases (esurveillance.epid.gov.lk). T = Timeliness refers to returns received on or before 07th Nov, 2025 Total number of reporting units 360 Number of reporting units provided for the current week: 359, C**-Completeness. A = Cases reported during the current week. B = Cumulative cases for the year.

Table 2: Vaccine-Preventable Diseases & AFP

01st – 07th Nov 2025 (45th Week)

Disease	No. of Cases by Province										Number of cases during current week in 2025	Number of cases during same week in 2024	Total number of cases to date in 2025	Total number of cases to date in 2024	Difference between the number of cases to date in 2025 & 2024
	W	C	S	N	E	NW	NC	U	Sab						
AFP*	01	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	02	01	52	66	-21.2%	
Diphtheria	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %	
Mumps	02	00	00	01	04	01	00	02	00	10	07	225	253	-11%	
Measles	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	01	291	-99%	
Rubella	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	04	02	-100%	
CRS**	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	0 %	
Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	11	05	120 %	
Neonatal Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %	
Japanese Encephalitis	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	04	11	-63.6 %	
Whooping Cough	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	23	59	-61 %	

Key to Table 1 & 2

Provinces: W: Western, C: Central, S: Southern, N: North, E: East, NC: North Central, NW: North Western, U: Uva, Sab: Sabaragamuwa.

RDHS Divisions: CB: Colombo, GM: Gampaha, KL: Kalutara, KD: Kandy, ML: Matale, NE: Nuwara Eliya, GL: Galle, HB: Hambantota, MT: Matara, JF: Jaffna, KN: Killinochchi, MN: Mannar, VA: Vavuniya, MU: Mullaitivu, BT: Batticaloa, AM: Ampara, TR: Trincomalee, KM: Kalpitiya, KR: Kurunegala, PU: Puttalam, AP: Anuradhapura, PO: Polonnaruwa, BD: Badulla, MO: Moneragala, RP: Ratnapura, KG: Kegalle.

Data Sources:

Weekly Return of Communicable Diseases: Diphtheria, Measles, Tetanus, Neonatal Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Mumps., Rubella, CRS,

Special Surveillance: AFP* (Acute Flaccid Paralysis), Japanese Encephalitis

CRS** =Congenital Rubella Syndrome

NA = Not Available

Take prophylaxis medications for leptospirosis during the paddy cultivation and harvesting seasons.

It is provided free by the MOH office / Public Health Inspectors.

Comments and contributions for publication in the WER Sri Lanka are welcome. However, the editor reserves the right to accept or reject items for publication. All correspondence should be mailed to The Editor, WER Sri Lanka, Epidemiological Unit, P.O. Box 1567, Colombo or sent by E-mail to chepid@sltnet.lk. Prior approval should be obtained from the Epidemiology Unit before publishing data in this publication

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