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The global cervical cancer burden in 2020 and recent trends in incidence: a baseline assessment for monitoring the WHO Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative

More efforts are needed to reach the WHO 2030 elimination targets

Lyon, France, 14 December 2022 – In a new study published today in *The Lancet Global Health*,¹ researchers from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and partners evaluate global cervical cancer rates and identify inequalities and gaps in countries and regions where scale-up is needed to reach the targets set by the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative.

“This study serves as a baseline from which to measure the impact of the WHO Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative. It reveals that in most countries, incidence rates of cervical cancer remain much higher than the threshold of 4 per 100 000 women set by WHO,” says Dr Deependra Singh, a researcher at IARC and a co-author of the study. “Unless countries scale up screening programmes and improve coverage of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and access to affordable treatment, the WHO 2030 elimination targets will be missed.”

Results

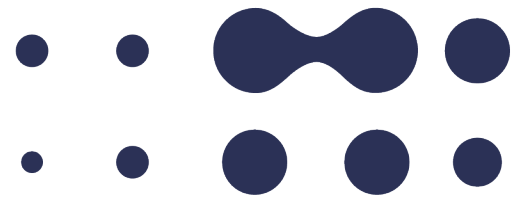
In 2020 there were estimated to be more than 600 000 new cases of cervical cancer worldwide and more than 340 000 deaths from the disease.

The researchers investigated time trends in cervical cancer incidence. The study shows that the progress in reducing the cervical cancer burden has been markedly imbalanced across countries and world regions in recent decades. The burden is particularly heavy in low- and middle-income countries.

There was large geographical variability in both incidence (rates ranged from 2 to 84 per 100 000 women) and mortality (rates ranged from 1 to 56 per 100 000 women).

Most of the countries or territories (172 of 185) included in this study had incidence rates that exceeded the threshold set by the WHO Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative, very often by a large extent. The rates were markedly above the threshold in populous countries such as China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil.

¹ Singh D, Vignat J, Lorenzoni V, Eslahi M, Ginsburg O, Lauby-Secretan B, et al. (2022). Global estimates of incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in 2020: a baseline analysis of the WHO Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative. *Lancet Glob Health*. Published online 14 December 2022. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(22\)00501-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(22)00501-0)



The study also highlighted a clear socioeconomic gradient in cervical cancer incidence and mortality. Progressively lower rates are seen as national average levels of the Human Development Index (HDI) increase.

“This study emphasizes the equitable allocation of resources and access to services as key elements in reducing inequalities in cervical cancer outcomes,” says Dr Valentina Lorenzoni, a researcher at the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna (Italy) and a co-author of the study. “Sustainable expansion of population-based cancer registries in every country of the world will serve as a gold standard in monitoring progress to attain the 90–70–90 targets to scale up the elimination strategy.”

Note to the Editor

The researchers used the GLOBOCAN data for 2020, which are available from the IARC Global Cancer Observatory (<https://gco.iarc.fr/today>), to estimate the cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates in 185 countries and territories.

In August 2020, the World Health Assembly adopted the [Global Strategy for Cervical Cancer Elimination](#).

To consider cervical cancer to be eliminated as a public health problem, all countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of fewer than 4 new cases of cervical cancer per 100 000 women per year. Achieving that goal rests on three key pillars and their corresponding targets:

- Vaccination: 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine by the age of 15 years;
- Screening: 70% of women screened using a high-performance test by the age of 35 years, and again by the age of 45 years;
- Treatment: 90% of women with precancer treated and 90% of women with invasive cancer managed.

Each country should meet the 90–70–90 targets by 2030 to get on the path towards eliminating cervical cancer by the end of this century.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.