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## Melanoma facts and statistics

Australia has one of the highest rates of [melanoma \(/understanding-melanoma/glossary/#melanoma\)](#) in the world and melanoma is often referred to as 'Australia's national cancer'. Here are some facts and statistics about melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer.

### At a glance

- Melanoma is the third most common cancer in Australian men, after prostate and [bowel \(/understanding-melanoma/glossary/#bowel\)](#) cancer, and it accounted for 10% of all their cancers in 2011.
- Melanoma is the third most common cancer in Australian women, after breast and bowel cancer, and it accounted for 9% of all their cancers in 2011.
- So after prostate, bowel and breast cancer, melanoma is the fourth most common cancer in Australia, accounting for 10% of all cancers in 2011.
- More than 13,000 Australians are expected to be diagnosed with melanoma in Australia in 2016.
- Melanoma represents 2% of all skin cancers, but causes 75% of skin cancer deaths.
- The good news is that if melanoma is identified at an early stage, simple treatment can result in a complete cure.

### Melanoma is Australia's national cancer

- Australia and New Zealand have the highest melanoma rates in the world with Queensland incidence rate of 71 cases per 100,000 people (for the years 2009–2013), vastly exceeding rates in all other jurisdictions nationally and internationally.
- More than 12,000 cases of melanoma were reported in 2012 in Australia.
- 48,937 are living with melanoma (at the end of 2010).
- One person every six hours will die from melanoma in Australia.
- Melanoma rates doubled in the 20 years from 1986–2006 and are still on the rise.
- In Australia, 1 in 14 men and 1 in 24 women will be diagnosed with melanoma sometime in their life.

### A deadly cancer in young Australians

- Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians (15–39 year olds) making up 20% of all their cancer cases.
- Melanoma kills more young Australians (20–39 year olds) than any other single cancer.
- Incidence people over 60 is also very high and increasing.

### Melanoma can kill you

- More than 1,600 Australians died from melanoma in 2013: four people each day.
- While 90% of people with melanoma are able to be cured by having the [primary melanoma \(/understanding-melanoma/glossary/#primary-melanoma\)](#) removed through surgery, in the other 10% of cases, life-threatening spread will have already occurred.
- There is a 90% chance of surviving at least 5 years with melanoma.

### Research is making a difference

- Over the past five years, the use of surgery plus additional treatments have significantly extended life expectancy in people with advanced disease (where the melanoma has spread to other organs). These **treatments (/understanding-melanoma/treatment-options/)** include targeted therapies (modifying the actions of specific genes) and immunotherapies (modifying the actions of the immune system). [Radiotherapy \(/understanding-melanoma/glossary/#radiotherapy\)](#) can also reduce recurrence rates.
- In a recent MIA-led trial, researchers have made a major breakthrough by tripling the life expectancy for some advanced melanoma patients. However many others are not responding to new treatments and further research is vital.

#### Sources

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. **Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality (ACIM) books** (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/acim-books/>): melanoma skin cancer. Canberra: AIHW. [Accessed January 2016].

#### Research Blog

(<https://www.melanoma.org.au/research/research-blog/using-clinical-features-to-identify-patients-at-high-risk-for-melanoma/>)

[Identifying patients at high risk for melanoma >](#)

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