The American Cancer Society’s report last month that the cancer death rate has dropped 23% since its peak in 1991 did not set off any celebrations. The steady downward trend has been apparent for some time. Besides, cancer will continue to rack up grim numbers this year. The society’s annual report estimates that 1.7 million Americans will be diagnosed with the disease in 2016, and that 600,000 will die from it. That’s more than 4,600 new cancer diagnoses each day and about 1,600 deaths.

But optimists will see good news. Overall incidence rates are stable in women and have been falling for men. By the society’s reckoning, 1.7 million cancer deaths have been avoided since 1991. It credits declines in smoking rates and improvements in screening and treatment for the deaths averted but does not apportion that credit. Falling death rates for four major cancers—lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer—are driving the overall trend. The report notes, for example, that death rates for female breast cancer are down 36% from its peak years. Bucking the favorable trends are upticks in the death rates rising for anal, liver, and pancreatic cancer.

The report delves into the racial and ethnic differences in cancer incidence and mortality; for example, the death rate for stomach and prostate cancer is 2.5 times higher for black men than it is for white men. Reasons for differences vary by the type of cancer and whether the difference is in incidence or mortality.

### Most common cancers by site, 2016

#### Males

- **Prostate**: Incidence 250,000, Deaths 50,000
- **Lung & bronchus**: Incidence 150,000, Deaths 50,000
- **Urinary bladder**: Incidence 100,000, Deaths 20,000
- **Colon**: Incidence 75,000, Deaths 20,000
- **Melanoma of the skin**: Incidence 40,000, Deaths 10,000
- **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma**: Incidence 35,000, Deaths 10,000
- **Kidney & renal pelvis**: Incidence 30,000, Deaths 5,000
- **Leukemia**: Incidence 25,000, Deaths 5,000
- **Liver & intrahepatic bile duct**: Incidence 20,000, Deaths 4,000
- **Pancreas**: Incidence 15,000, Deaths 3,000

#### Females

- **Breast**: Incidence 250,000, Deaths 50,000
- **Lung & bronchus**: Incidence 150,000, Deaths 30,000
- **Uterine corpus**: Incidence 100,000, Deaths 20,000
- **Thyroid**: Incidence 75,000, Deaths 10,000
- **Colon**: Incidence 50,000, Deaths 10,000
- **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma**: Incidence 40,000, Deaths 10,000
- **Melanoma of the skin**: Incidence 30,000, Deaths 5,000
- **Leukemia**: Incidence 25,000, Deaths 5,000
- **Pancreas**: Incidence 20,000, Deaths 4,000
- **Kidney & renal pelvis**: Incidence 15,000, Deaths 3,000