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Press Release

Cancer in Hong Kong: Understanding the Risk and the Numbers

Hong Kong, [2 July 2026] – In this first episode of our awareness series, we look at the "hidden heartbeat" of cancer statistics in our city—the numbers that define our collective risk.

The 14-minute reality

Whilst we sleep tonight, 35 more people in Hong Kong will wake up tomorrow morning diagnosed with cancer; you could be one of them. To understand the scale of cancer in Hong Kong, we look at how often a new diagnosis occurs. Based on the most recent data, more than 37,900¹ new cases were recorded in a single year. This means that **every 14 minutes, a person in Hong Kong is diagnosed with cancer**; that's more than 100 Hong Kongers every single day of the year. It is a reminder that cancer is not a distant possibility, but a constant reality in our healthcare landscape.

1 in 4 vs. 1 in 5 – Will you be the unlucky one?

Cancer can strike at any age. When we look at the probability of being diagnosed before the age of 75, the statistics offer a clear wake-up call for financial and health planning:

- **For Males:** 1 in 4 will develop cancer before age 75.¹
- **For Females:** 1 in 5 will develop cancer before age 75.¹

These odds suggest that cancer is a foreseeable life event for a significant portion of our population. Actuaries assess risks to help design affordable protection plans so that a diagnosis doesn't lead to a major financial burden for a family.

What are the trends?

As our population ages, cancer diagnoses continue to increase gradually. One of the most striking trends we've identified is that cancer is affecting men and women differently over time. When we adjust for the effects of an ageing population, a clear split emerges:

- **For Men:** The overall incidence rate has been relatively stable.¹
- **For Women:** The trend is deteriorating, with an increasing rate of new cases observed over the last decade.¹

Incident rates are still high for both groups, but women have recently surpassed men in the total number of new cancer cases diagnosed annually in Hong Kong.¹

Is it this simple for all cancers?

While the average (adjusted for the ageing population) shows these trends, the reality beneath the surface is more complex. While some types of cancer are in retreat, others are rising sharply—often linked to modern lifestyles in a high-density city.

Survival: The power of early detection

The final, and highly important, number we track is survival. Data consistently shows that cancer is not a single outcome, but a race against time.

¹ Overview of Cancer Statistics in Hong Kong, accessed on May 9, 2026,

https://www.cancer.gov.hk/en/hong_kong_cancer/overview_of_cancer_statistics_in_hong_kong.html

² Overview of Hong Kong Cancer Statistics of 2023 About the Hong ..., accessed on May 9, 2026,

<https://www3.ha.org.hk/cancereg/pdf/overview/Overview%20of%20HK%20Cancer%20Stat%202023.pdf>

Survival rates by stage tell a powerful story: for many common cancers, the 5-year survival rate for patients diagnosed at **Stage I** is **90% or higher**². At this early stage, survival is often relatively close to that of the general population. However, that survival rate drops drastically—sometimes to below 10%—if the cancer is not caught until **Stage IV**².

Why actuaries care

From an actuarial perspective, this "survival gap" is why we strongly advocate for early detection. It doesn't just save lives; it reduces the complexity and cost of treatment, keeping the entire healthcare system more affordable for everyone.

At the Actuarial Society of Hong Kong (ASHK), our mission is to serve the public interest by using our expertise in risk and data to build a more resilient society. While you might associate actuaries with insurance premiums, financial and capital management, or retirement funds, we are essentially "risk architects." We analyse health data to help the community, insurers, and the government prepare for the future, so that healthcare remains sustainable and accessible for everyone when it is needed most.

Stay tuned for the next episode, where we will dive deeper into how you can take control of your own "risk model."

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About the Actuarial Society of Hong Kong

Founded in 1968, the Actuarial Society of Hong Kong (ASHK) is the professional body for actuaries in Hong Kong. The ASHK provides a platform for actuaries to improve sustainability by helping people and organisations be more financially resilient with a positive social impact.