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Melanoma of the skin

Key findings:

- *Melanoma of the skin ranks eighth among the major cancers in new cases diagnosed and eighteenth in cancer-related death.*
- *The incidence rate for women is significantly higher than that for men.*
- *Melanoma of the skin ranks eighteenth among cancers in years of life lost, and more than a third of those diagnosed are under age 50.*
- *Ireland's female, and total, incidence rates are significantly higher than those in the EU .*
- *Survival rates for men in Ireland, Europe and the US are significantly lower than those for women.*
- *Incidence and mortality rate trends for men and women in all Ireland, for the Republic of Ireland and for Northern Ireland are essentially flat.*
- *The central eastern seaboard region has significantly more deaths than expected.*
- *The high incidence rates among women and low survival rates among men point toward the need for increased education about the risks of ultraviolet light exposure and the importance of checking for early signs.*

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Risks and interventions

- Frequent sunburns, especially in childhood and adolescence, increases the risk for melanoma of the skin.
- Individuals with fair skin, red hair and freckles appear to be at greatest risk.
- If detected early, melanoma of the skin can often be cured.
- Surgery is an effective treatment for early stage melanoma of the skin.

Melanoma of the skin ranks eighth among the major cancer sites in terms of new cases diagnosed each year, and eighteenth in terms of cancer related death.

Nonetheless, each year nearly 600 new cases are diagnosed and over 100 individuals die from it.

Variation by gender

Unlike most cancers, the incidence rate among women is significantly higher than the rate for men. Mortality rates for men and women are essentially the same.

For women, melanoma of the skin ranks sixth in new cases diagnosed; for men it is twelfth. For women it is eighteenth in terms of cancer-related death; for men, sixteenth.

International comparisons

Incidence among women is higher than the EU and the same as the US. Mortality for women is higher in Ireland than in the US while incidence and mortality rates for men in Ireland are lower than in the US.

Survival rates for melanoma of the skin are high. Among women in Ireland, 90% are still alive after 5 years; better than Europe and the same as the US. Among men, the rate is lower, around 80%; about the same as the EU but lower than the US.

table 8.1

melanoma of the skin incidence and mortality

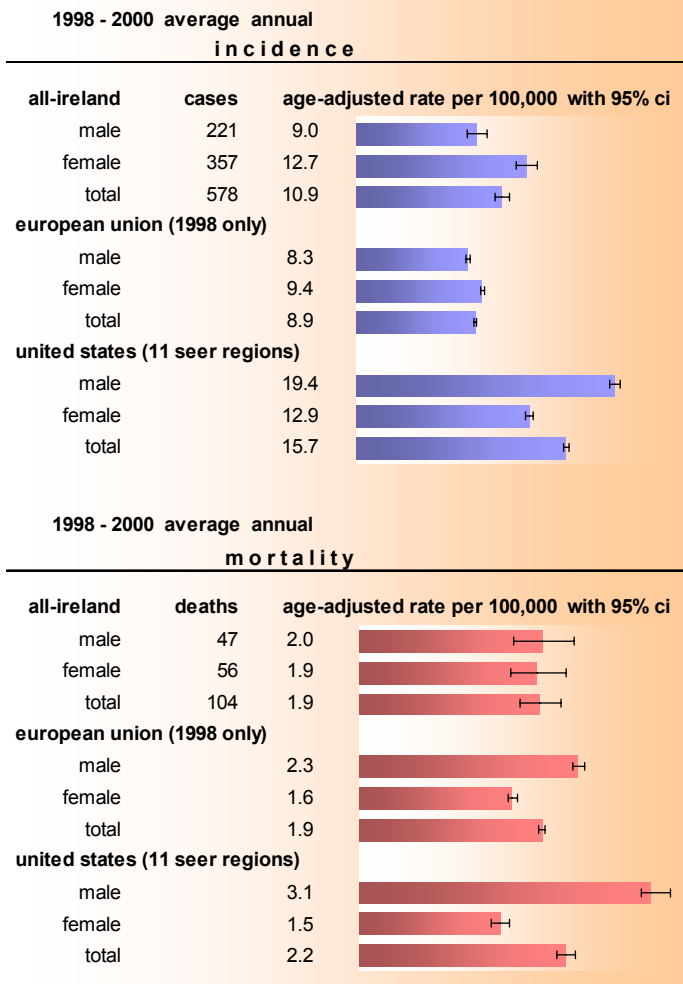


table 8.2

melanoma of the skin 5-year relative survival (%)

	male		female	
	rate	95% ci	rate	95% ci
ireland	80.4	76.2, 84.5	92.4	89.9, 94.9
europe (eurocare)	74.8	72.7, 77.0	84.3	83.1, 85.6
united states (seer)	86.9	85.9, 88.0	91.5	92.4, 90.6

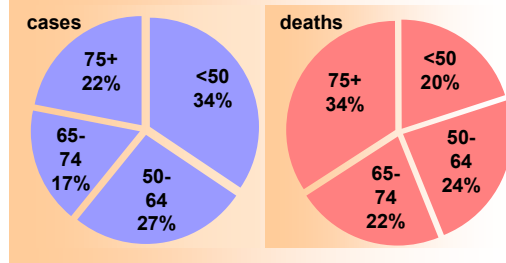
Age distribution

While melanoma is rare among young people, a large proportion of people diagnosed with melanoma of the skin are young: more than a third are under age 50, and nearly two-thirds are under age 65. Half are under age 57.

But since survival rates are relatively high, melanoma of the skin ranks eighteenth among major sites in terms of years of life lost to cancer.

Nonetheless, approximately 44% of the people who die from melanoma of the skin are under age 65.

figure 8.1
melanoma of the skin age at diagnosis & death
1998-2000



Time trends

No significant change is seen in the male, female or combined rates for either incidence or mortality.

figure 8.2
melanoma of the skin incidence rates by sex and year (1994-2000)

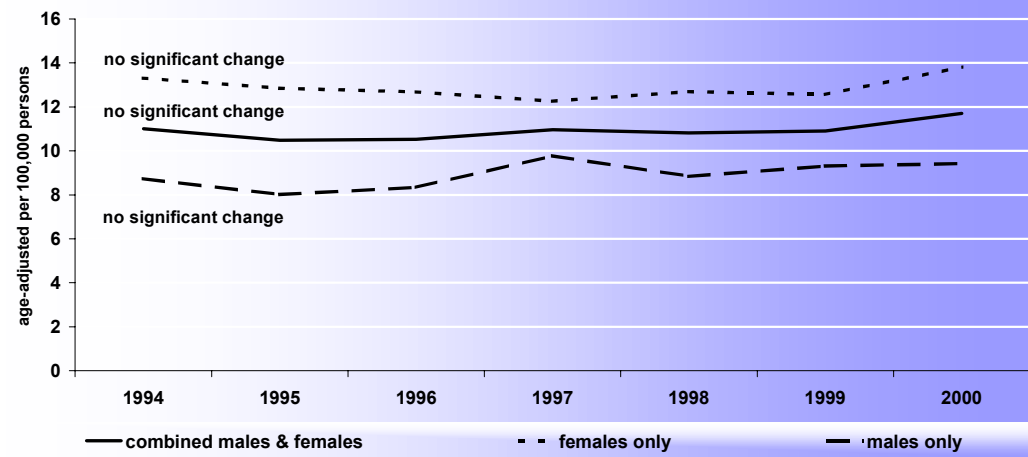
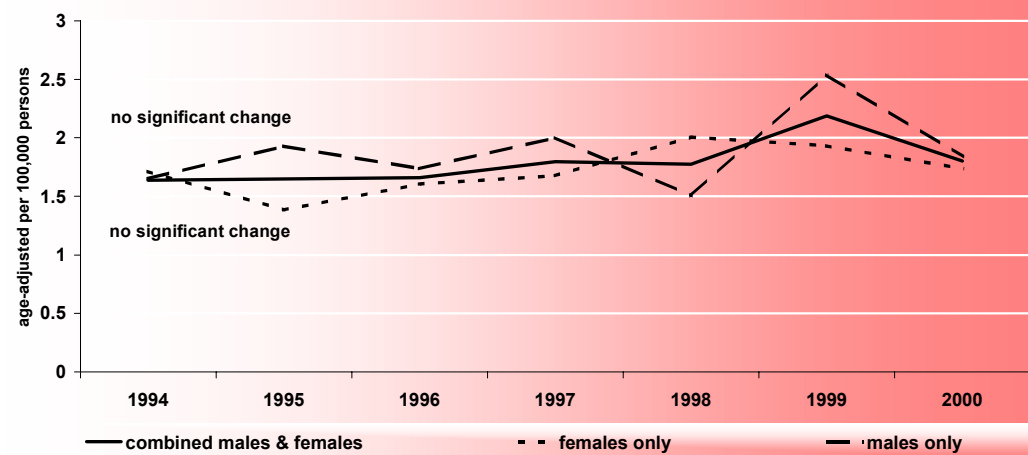
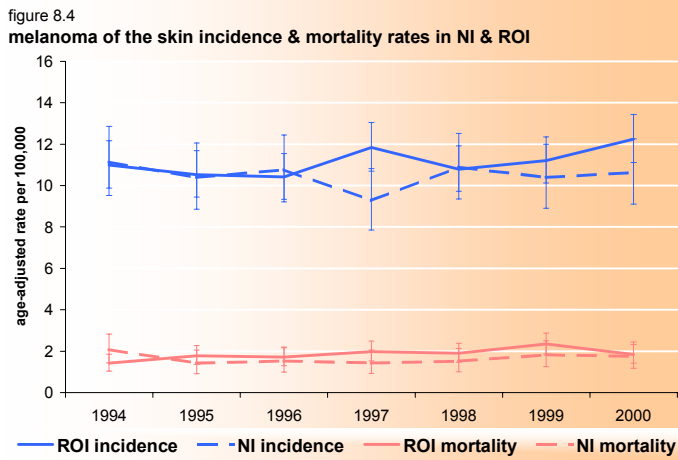


figure 8.3
melanoma of the skin mortality rates by sex and year (1994-2000)



Geographic variations

Incidence rates in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) are essentially the same for each individual year.



Similarly, there is no change over time in the incidence rates in either ROI or in NI. This is true for both sexes combined as well as men and women separately.

So, too, mortality rates in ROI and NI remain unchanged. Again, this is true for sex-specific rates as well as for both sexes combined. Annual mortality rates in NI and ROI, are also essentially equal.

In comparing the counties' and district councils' incidence rates with the all Ireland rate, only Waterford is significantly high. Both Ballymena and Clare are significantly low. In comparing the mortality rates, no county or district council is significantly high or low. Dublin, however, is very close to being significantly high. (See figures 8.7 and 8.8)

When ranked by their incidence rates, those counties and district councils in the lowest quintile are mostly in the central north region. Those in the upper quintile seem generally spread throughout the island. For mortality, those in the lower quintile are within central and northern parts of the island; those in the upper quintile are on the eastern, western and southern shoreline. (See figures 8.5 and 8.6)

The north central region is identified by the spatial scan statistic as having significantly fewer cases than expected (see figure 8.5). The central eastern coast is seen to have significantly more deaths than expected (see figure 8.6).

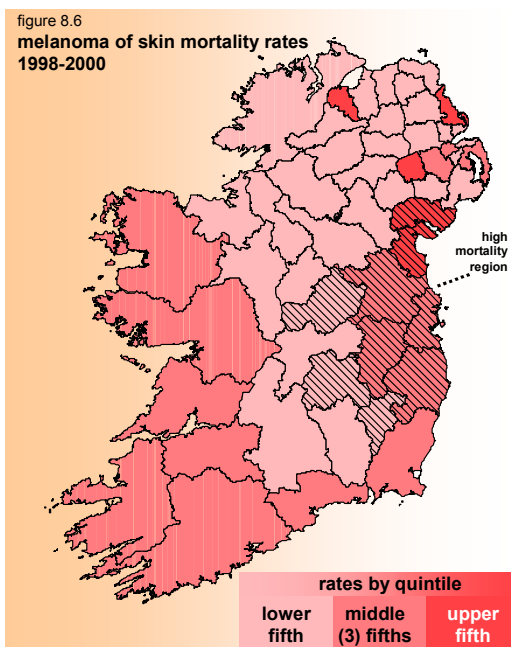
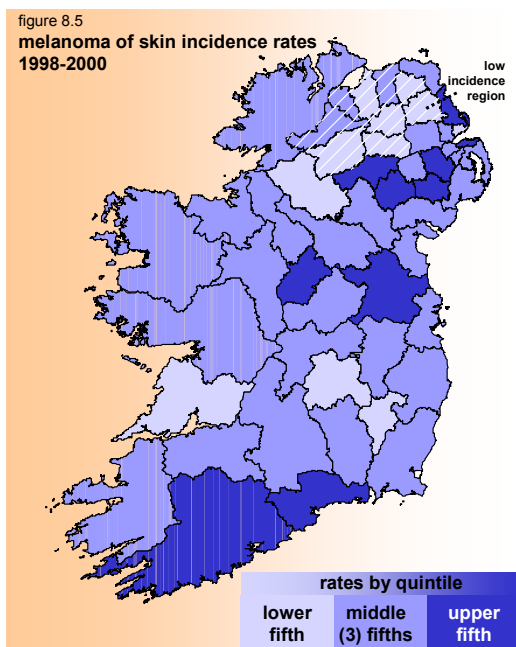


figure 8.7

**1998-2000 age-adjusted incidence rates
melanoma of the skin by county/district council**

with average annual incidence in ()'s and 95% confidence intervals shown by |—|

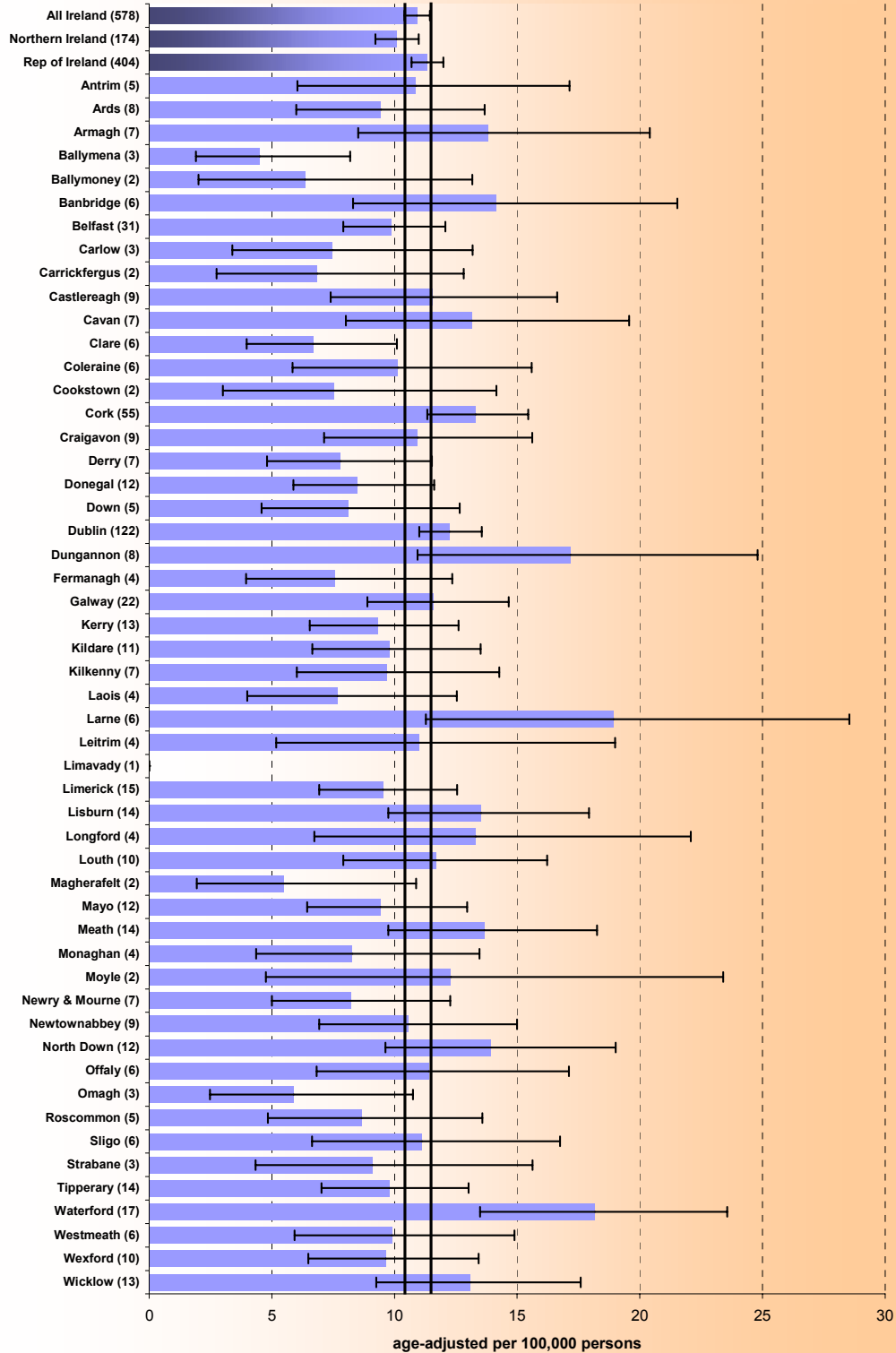


figure 8.8

**1998-2000 age-adjusted mortality rates
melanoma of the skin by county/district council**

with average annual deaths in ()'s and 95% confidence intervals shown by |—|

