

# Cancer Statistics for US Adults 85 and Older

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## Background

- Adults ages 85 and older, sometimes referred to as the “oldest old,” are the fastest-growing population group in the US.
- The number of adults ages 85+ is expected to nearly triple from 6.4 million in 2016 to 19.0 million by 2060, primarily fueled by increasing life expectancy from declines in all-cause mortality due to less smoking, improved screening, and treatment advances.
- Despite the increasing numbers and changing profile of this population, relatively little is known about the cancer burden in this age group.

## Methods

- Data provided by NAACCR were used for the distribution of cases by stage at diagnosis and analyses of incidence trends in two older age groups (65-84 years and 85+) for selected sites during 1995 to 2015.
- Data for the most recent time period reflect 96% coverage of the US population, excluding data from 4 states (KS, MN, NV, and NM) and DC. An additional 18 were excluded from trend analyses because data were not available for all years during the study period.
- Data from the 18 SEER registries were used in analyses of 5-year relative survival rates and receipt of surgical treatment in the most recent time period (2011-2015).
- The 2015 National Health Interview Survey was used for estimates of cancer screening prevalence.

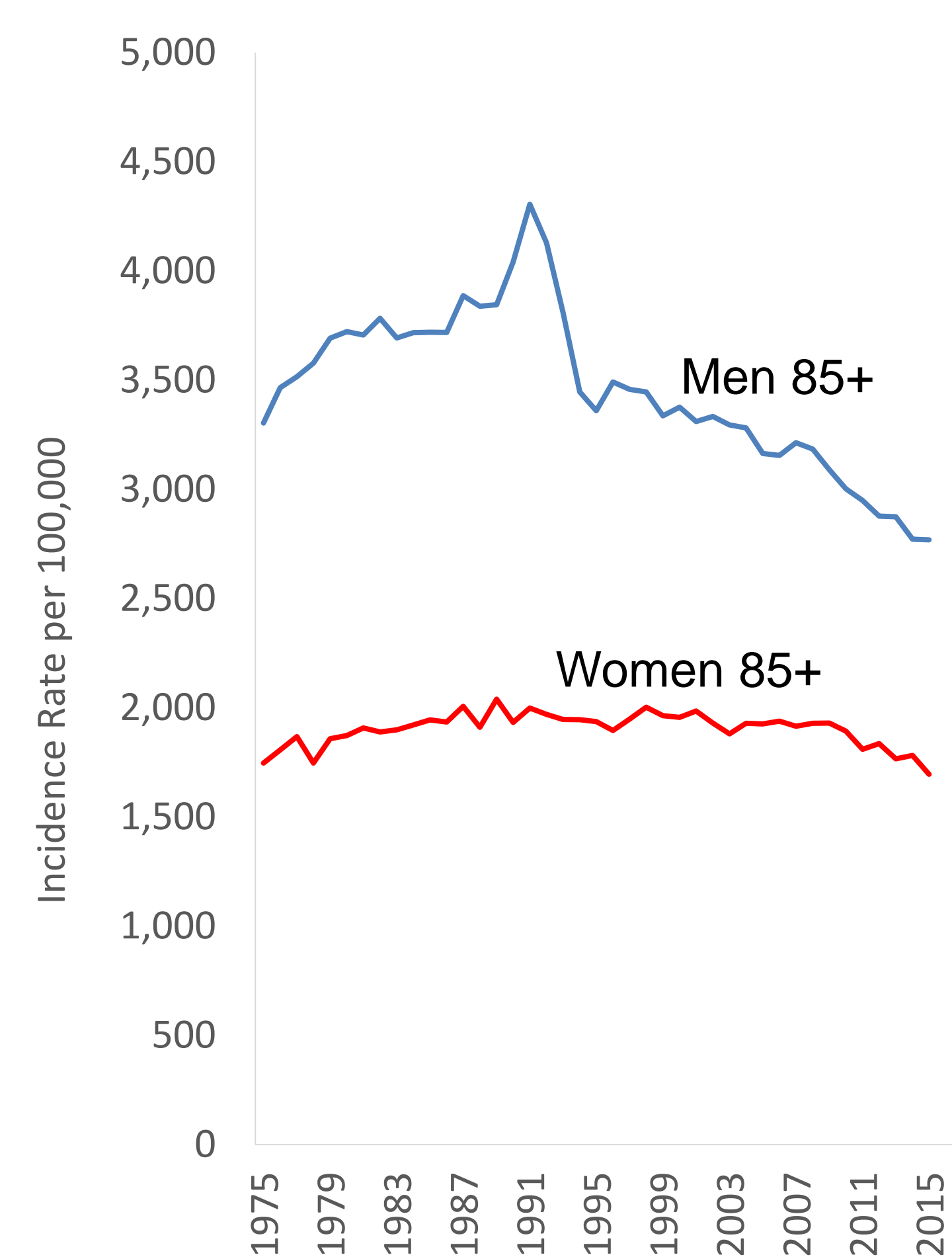
## Results

- In 2019, there will be approximately 140,690 cancer cases diagnosed and about 103,250 cancer deaths among the oldest old in the US.

- Top cancers diagnosed in men and women, ages 85+

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Men</b>               | <b>Women</b>                 |
| 1. Lung & bronchus (16%) | 1. Breast (19%)              |
| 2. Prostate (13%)        | 2. Colon & rectum (14%)      |
| 3. Urinary bladder (13%) | 3. Lung & bronchus (14%)     |
| 4. Colon & rectum (11%)  | 4. Pancreas (5%)             |
| 5. Melanoma (6%)         | 5. Non-Hodgkin lymphoma (5%) |

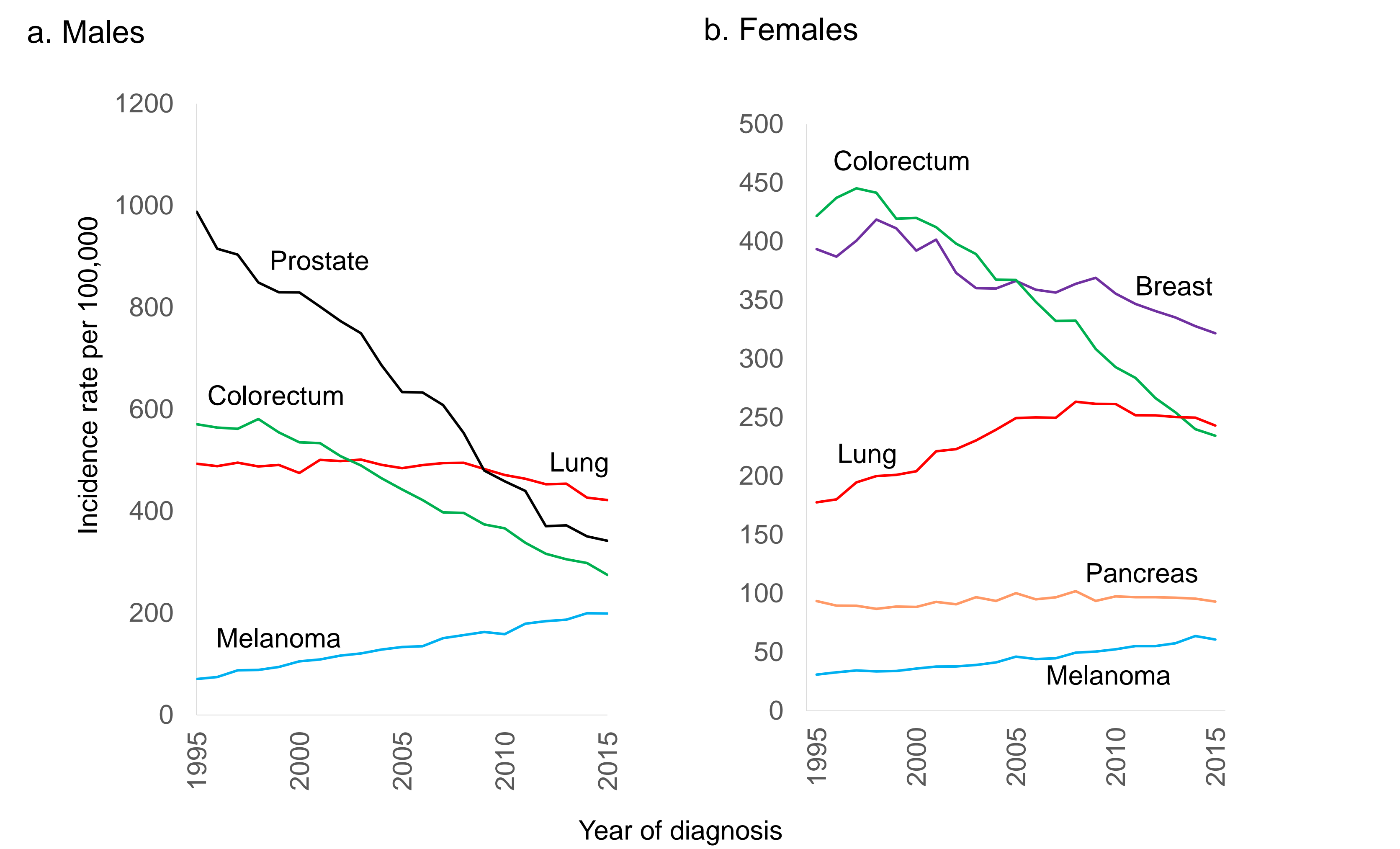
**Figure 1. Trends in cancer incidence rates, ages 85+, 1975-2015**



- The overall cancer incidence rate has decreased men 85+ since about 1990 (Figure 1), reflecting sharp declines in incidence rates for cancers of the prostate, colorectum, and, more recently, lung (Figure 2a).
- Among women 85+, the overall cancer incidence rate peaked around 1990 before subsequently decreasing (Figure 1), largely reflecting declining rates for breast and colorectal cancers (Figure 2b).

## Results (continued)

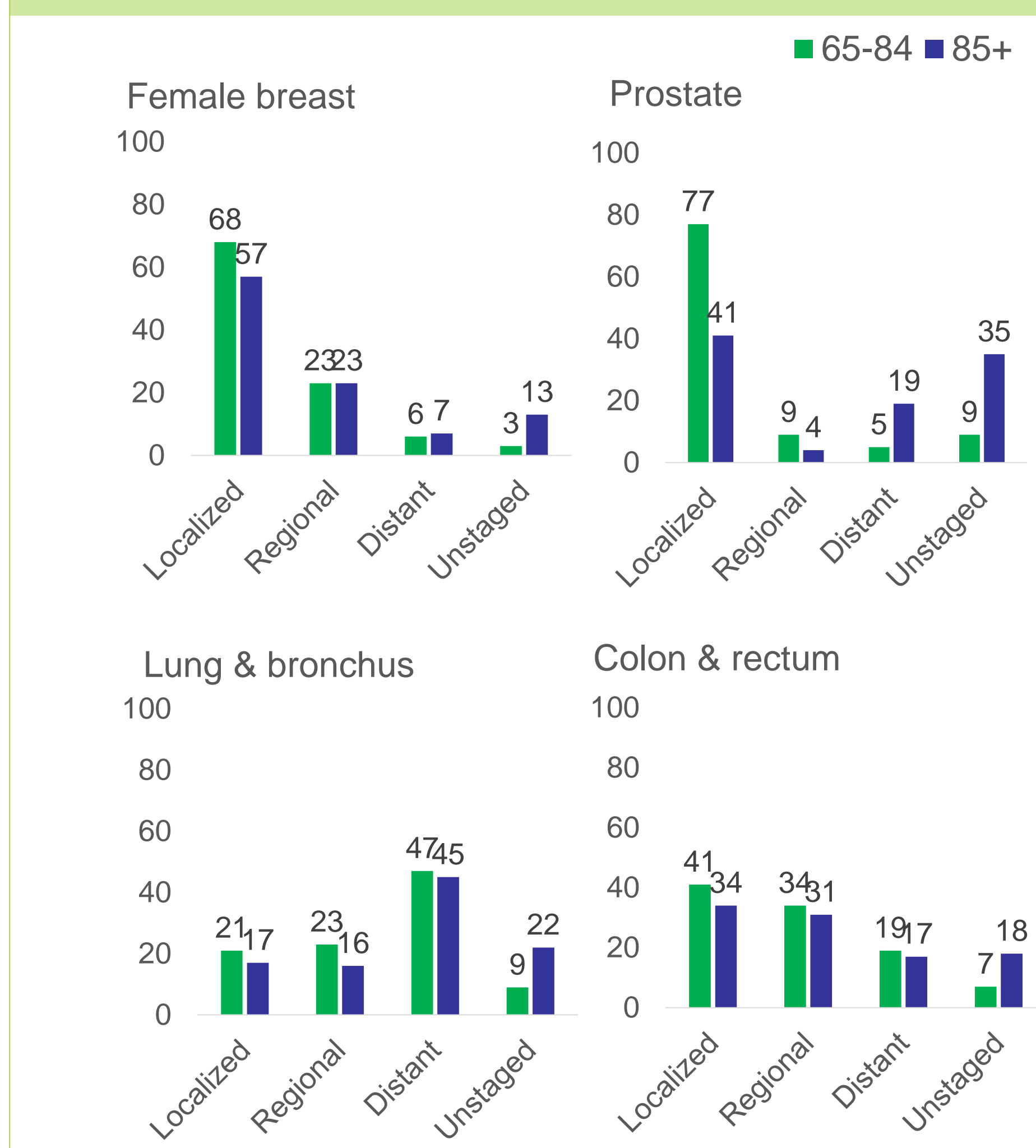
**Figure 2. Trends in cancer incidence rates for selected cancers, ages 85+, 1995-2015**



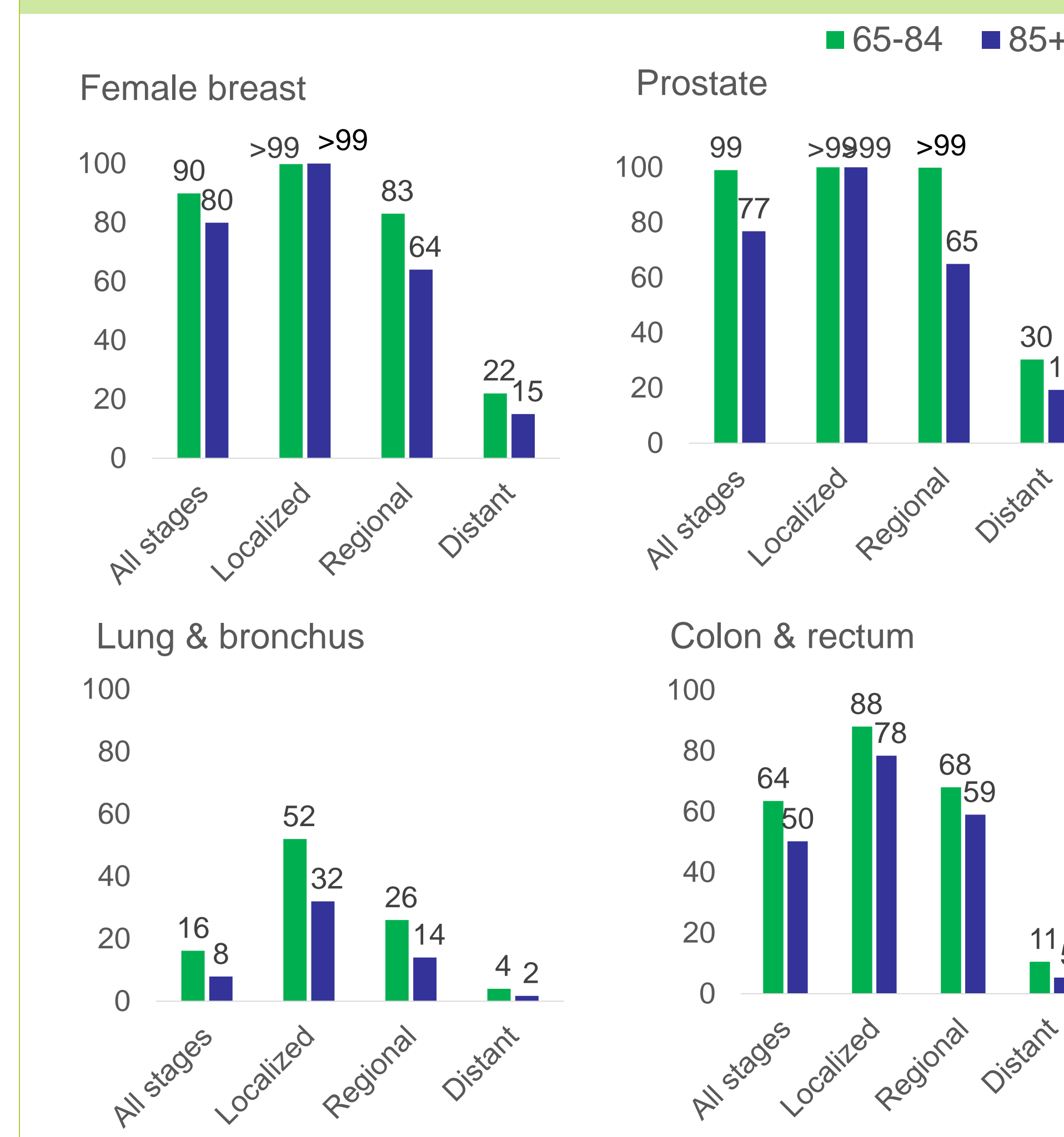
Incidence trends for men and women ages 85+ (Figure 2) are generally similar to those ages 65-84, with a few notable exceptions:

- The lung cancer incidence rate peaked around 2003 among men 85+ compared to a peak in the mid-1980s among men ages 65-84, reflecting generational differences in smoking patterns.
- Melanoma incidence has increased more rapidly over the past several decades in the oldest old men, which is also thought to be a birth cohort effect reflecting excessive sun exposure among children during the first half of the 20th century
- Although the breast cancer rate has increased slightly among women ages 65 to 84 years since 2004, the rate has continued to decline in the oldest age group (2.1% per year since 2009).
- The pancreatic cancer incidence rate continues to increase in women ages 65 to 84, but the incidence rate has leveled off in women 85+ since 2008.
- Similar to men, the melanoma incidence rate has increased more rapidly among the oldest old women, by 3.7% per year from 2000 to 2015 versus 3.1%.

**Figure 3. Stage distribution for selected cancers in two age groups, 2008-2014**



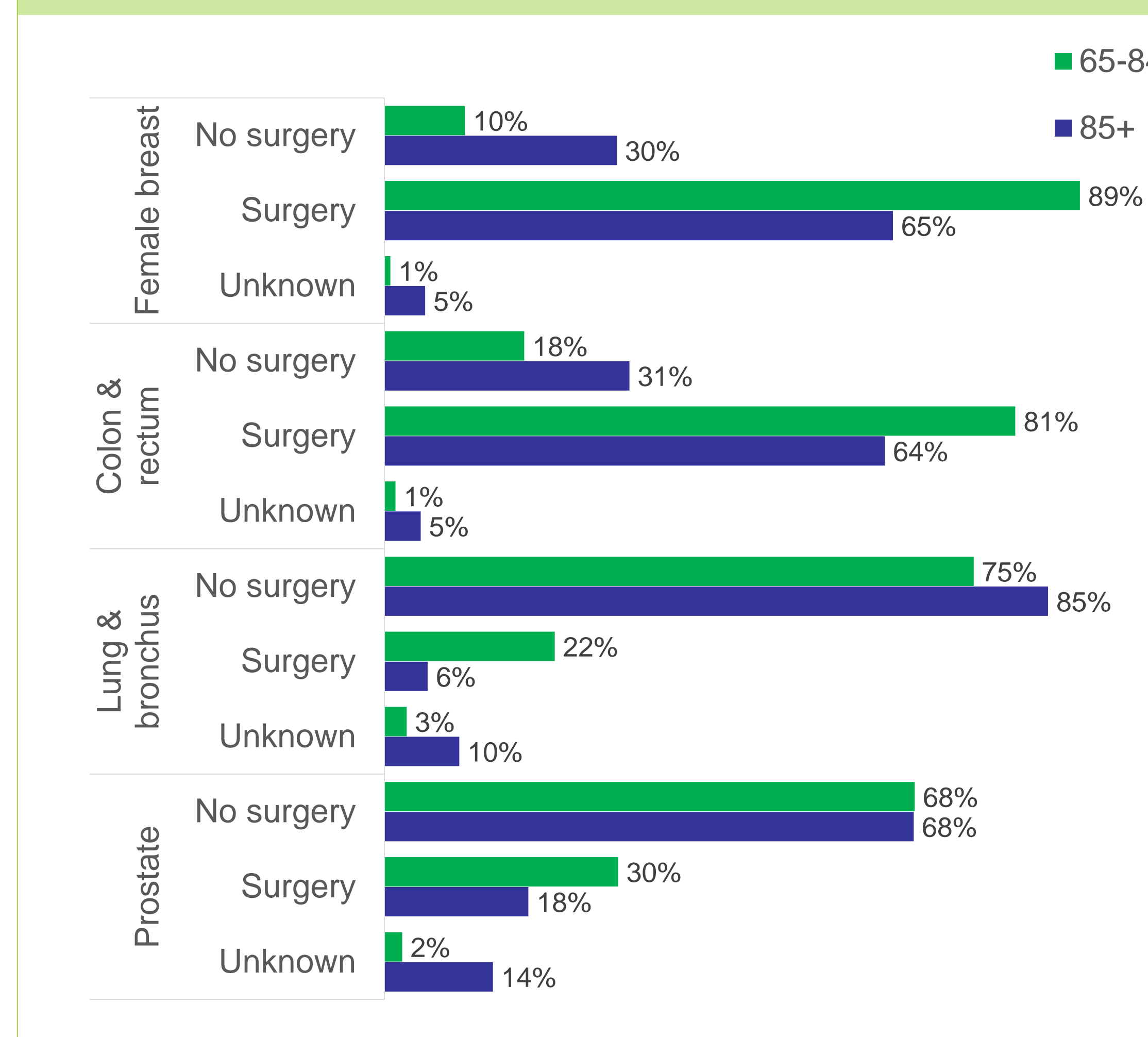
**Figure 4. Five-year relative survival for selected cancers in two age groups, 2008-2014**



### Screening prevalence among adults 85+, 2015

Mammography in the past 2 years	34%
Pap test within the past 3 years	18%
Combined Stool/Endoscopy	52%
<b>Males</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>47%</b>
PSA test in the past 1 year	29%

**Figure 5. Receipt of surgical treatment for selected cancers in two age groups, 2011-2015**



## Conclusions

- Although cancer trends in the oldest old are generally similar to those in the younger (65-84) age group examined, we note some important differences (e.g. lung cancer and melanoma) reflecting strong birth cohort effects because of elevated risks in the oldest generations.
- Cancer patients ages 85 and older are less likely to be diagnosed at an early disease stage than those ages 65-84.
- The oldest old cancer patients are two to four times more likely to lack staging information in medical records than cancer patients ages 65-84.
- Cancer patients 85+ have the lowest survival of any age group, with the largest disparities when cancer is diagnosed at advanced stages.
- Although screening is generally not recommended for those ages 85+, data from the National Health Interview Survey indicate unexpectedly high rates of screening in adults ages 85+, many of whom have very limited life-expectancies.
- Cancer patients 85+ are less likely to receive surgical treatment than patients ages 65-84, reflecting the complexities of treating older patients, including the presence of multiple comorbidities, functional declines, and cognitive impairment, as well as competing mortality risks and undertreatment.
- More research on cancer in the oldest Americans is needed to improve outcomes and anticipate the complex health care needs of this rapidly growing population.