

# Study: Effects of cancer on the employment and earnings of cancer survivors, 1992 to 2000

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In addition to the physical and psychological toll, a cancer diagnosis can affect both a person's work status and annual income.

A new study draws on data from a number of sources including the 1991 Census, the Canadian Cancer Registry, the Vital Statistics Registry and personal income tax records to examine the link between cancer and employment. The study focused on the three-year period following diagnosis to gauge whether cancer survivors were working or not working and their total annual earnings. The cancer survivor group consisted of individuals 25 to 61 years old diagnosed with cancer for the first time from 1992 to 2000 who survived for at least three years after the diagnosis. This group was then compared with the group of individuals who had similar characteristics, but had never been diagnosed with cancer.

The results show that, compared with individuals who had not been diagnosed with cancer, cancer survivors' probability of working was 3.0 percentage points lower, on average, in the first year following the year of their diagnosis. In the second year after diagnosis their probability of working was 3.7 percentage points lower, and in the third year 4.8 percentage points lower.

There was also an effect on income. The average annual earnings of cancer survivors who returned to work in the year after diagnosis were 9.7% to 10.6% lower than comparable individuals who had not been diagnosed with cancer. However, in the second and third years post-diagnosis, the earnings of cancer survivors who returned to work were 5.5% to 6.6% and 3.9% to 5.4% lower than the comparison group.

There was also variation in both the work status and earnings, depending on the type of cancer. For individuals with cancers with lower survival rates, the probability of working the year following diagnosis was 11.0 percentage points lower than the comparison group. For those diagnosed with a high-survival-rate type of cancer, the probability of working was 2.0 percentage points lower.

As well, the effects of cancer on annual earnings are larger and longer lasting for survivors with low-survival-rate cancer, which is consistent with the results pertaining to employment status.

A combination of factors including earlier diagnoses, improvements in cancer treatment and better follow-up care have substantially increased the number of cancer survivors during the last two decades.

The research paper "The Effects of Cancer on Employment and Earnings of Cancer Survivors" part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series* ([11F0019M](#)), is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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