

# ACS Study Finds Early-Onset Colorectal Cancer Cases Surge Globally

**American Cancer Society researchers call it a “global phenomenon” and stress increasing awareness and prevention to help reverse this trend in colorectal cancer rates**

**ATLANTA, December 11, 2024** — A new study led by [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) researchers shows that early-onset colorectal cancer (CRC) incidence rates are rising in 27 of 50 countries/territories worldwide, 20 of which have either exclusive or faster increases for early-onset disease. In 14 countries, including the United States, rates are increasing in young adults while stabilizing in those 50 years and older. The research is published today in the journal [The Lancet Oncology](#).

“The increase in early-onset colorectal cancer is a global phenomenon,” said [Dr. Hyuna Sung](#), senior principal scientist, cancer surveillance research at the American Cancer Society and lead author of the study. “Previous studies have shown this rise in predominately high-income Western countries, but now, it is documented in various economies and regions worldwide.”

The primary study objective was to examine contemporary CRC incidence trends in young versus older adults using data through 2017 from 50 countries/territories. Data were compiled using the *Cancer Incidence in Five Continents Plus* and trends were examined for age-standardized incidence rates of CRC ranging from 1943-2017. Temporal trends were visualized and quantified by age at diagnosis (25-49 years and 50-74 years). Average annual percentage changes (AAPC) were estimated for the last 10 years of data.

During the past decade, incidence rates of early-onset CRC (25-49 years) were stable in 23 countries, but increased in 27 countries, with the greatest annual increases in New Zealand (4.0%), Chile (4.0%) and Puerto Rico (3.8%). Fourteen of the 27 countries/territories showed either stable (Puerto Rico, Argentina, Norway, France, Ireland) or decreasing rates (Israel, Canada, the USA, England, Germany, Scotland, Slovenia, Australia, and New Zealand) in older adults. The rise in early-onset CRC was faster among men than women in Chile, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Ecuador, Thailand, Sweden, Israel, and Croatia, while young women experienced faster increases in England, Norway, Australia, Türkiye, Costa Rica, and Scotland. For the remaining 13 countries with increasing trends in both age groups, the annual percentage increase in young compared to older adults was larger in Chile, Japan, Sweden, the Netherlands, Croatia, and Finland, smaller in Thailand, Martinique, Denmark, Costa Rica, and similar in Türkiye, Ecuador, and Belarus. For the last five years, the incidence rate of early-onset CRC was highest in Australia, Puerto Rico, New Zealand, the U.S., and the Republic of Korea (14 to 17 per 100,000) and lowest in Uganda and India (4 per 100,000).

“The global scope of this concerning trend highlights the need for innovative tools to prevent and control cancers linked to dietary habits, physical inactivity, and excess body weight. Ongoing efforts are essential to identify the additional factors behind these trends and to develop effective prevention strategies tailored to younger generations and local resources worldwide,” added Sung. “Raising awareness of the trend and the distinct symptoms of early-onset colorectal cancer (e.g., rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, altered bowel habits, and unexplained weight loss) among young people and primary care providers can help reduce delays in diagnosis and decrease mortality.”

Other ACS researchers contributing to the study include [Rebecca Siegel](#), [Chenxi Jiang](#), and senior author [Dr. Ahmedin Jemal](#).

For more information on colorectal cancer, read [here](#).

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## About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 110 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families

as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit [cancer.org](https://cancer.org) or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#).

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