

# CANCER: A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

Cancer poses a major challenge to public health across the globe, as reflected by the rising number of new cancer diagnoses and cancer deaths around the world. The burden of cancer also highlights key barriers to achieving global health equity, as indicated by the vast disparities between countries with low, medium, high, and very high human development index (HDI)<sup>a</sup>. The following examples offer a broad view of the global burden of cancer.

## New Cases

19.3 million in 2020<sup>b</sup>; projected to increase 47 percent to 28.4 million in 2040.



## Cancer Deaths

One in 6 of all deaths worldwide is attributable to cancer. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates for 2019, cancer is the first or second leading cause of death before the age of 70 in 112 out of 183 countries.



## Lung Cancer

Lung cancer was the most diagnosed cancer worldwide until 2018 (2 million or 11.6 percent of all new cancer cases in 2018). It remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths (1.8 million or 18 percent of all estimated cancer-related deaths in 2020<sup>b</sup>). Nearly 62 percent (1.1 million) of these deaths are estimated to occur in Asia.



## Tobacco Use

Tobacco use continues to be the major preventable cause of death from cancer worldwide. In 2018<sup>b</sup>, tobacco use was responsible for 25 percent of all cancer deaths globally.



## Breast Cancer

Breast cancer (2.3 million female breast cancers, which make up 11.7 percent of all new cancer cases) surpassed lung cancer (2.2 million or 11.4 percent of all new cases for both sexes combined) in 2020<sup>b</sup> as the type of cancer most diagnosed worldwide.



## Disparities

The projected increase in cancer incidence from 2020 to 2040 is estimated to be more pronounced in countries with low and medium HDI, 95 percent and 64 percent respectively, compared to countries with high and very high HDI, 56 percent and 32 percent respectively.



<sup>a</sup> Human Development Index (HDI): A composite metric of human development in key areas of life—education, life expectancy, and per capita income—used by the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report Office. HDI is sometimes used interchangeably with The World Bank classification of countries into low income, low middle income, upper middle income, and high income countries based on Gross National Income per capita.

<sup>b</sup> The indicated years are the most recent years for which the included data are available.