

VARIATIONS IN PLACE OF DEATH FOR CANCER PATIENTS ACROSS THE UK

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Background

Place of death is an important indicator of the quality of care received at the end of life. We know that with the right support, 73%¹ of cancer patients in the UK would prefer to die at home, however only 40%² actually do. Previous studies on place of death for cancer patients have focused on England only. This analysis summarises place of death for cancer patients across the UK to explore variations that may exist by locality and age. These data identify variations in the type of care received by cancer patients at the end of life and should be used to support service improvement and planning.

Methods

Secondary analysis of place of death from cancer (malignant neoplasm’s ICD-10 C00-97) in 2011, from UK death registrations. Figures are for deaths registered in the calendar year (2011) and exclude non residents. Analysis explores variation in place of death across local authorities (or equivalent) and is presented aggregated to regions (and by local authority or equivalent in the maps) and by age (in the graphs). Data were analysed by three broad age bands (0-44, 45-64 and 65+ years). Place of death was defined as deaths occurring at home (own residence, care and nursing homes), hospital and other.

Results

Significant variation in place of death for cancer patients exists in the UK, both between and within nations (see table 1 and maps 1 & 2). Fewer than a third (29%) of cancer patients die at home (own residence, care and nursing homes) in south-east Scotland compared with almost half (47%) in south-west England². The map highlights these variations for cancer deaths at home by local authority (or equivalent) across the UK. Specific variations also exist among the older population, more than half (53%) of older patients (over 65 years) in south-east Scotland die in hospital, compared with around a third (35%) in south-east England. Variations also exist between age groups (see graph 1) with a slightly higher proportion of over 65s dying in hospital compared to younger age groups in majority of regions.

Conclusions

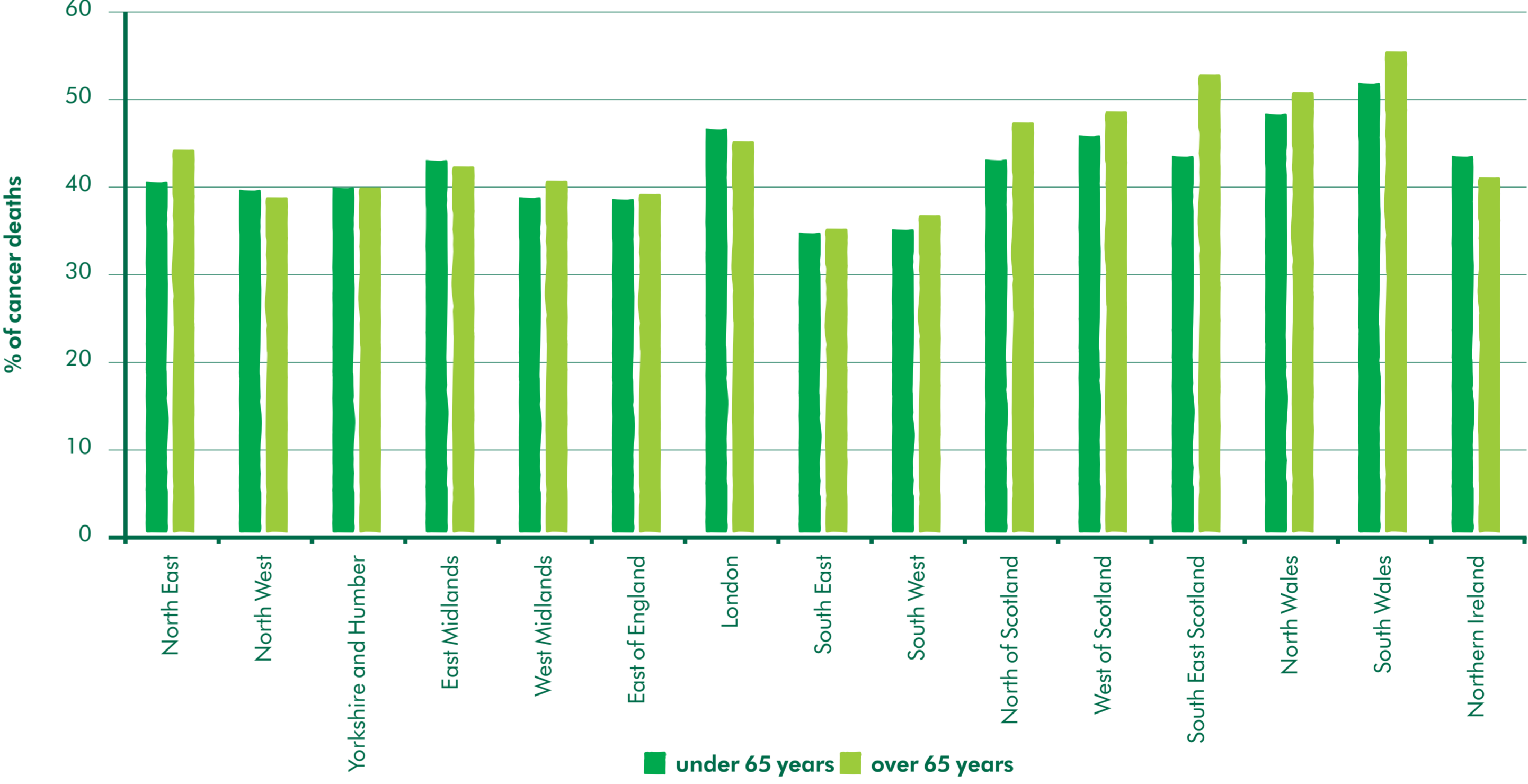
Although the majority of cancer patients would prefer to die at home, these findings show the likelihood of doing so varies significantly across the UK. Variations also exist by age group with a higher proportion of older people dying in hospital compared to the younger age groups. Variations in place of death could be due to inequalities in access to social care, awareness of entitlement for support or differing needs. For example, the 2011 VOICES survey of bereaved relatives in England showed regional variations in the proportion of relatives who felt they got the necessary level of support from health and social services when caring for the terminally ill at home during their last months of life³.

More research needs to be done to understand why these variations exist both by geographic region and age. Macmillan are currently scoping further work to understand more about the needs and experiences of cancer patients at the end of life in particular in relation to social care.

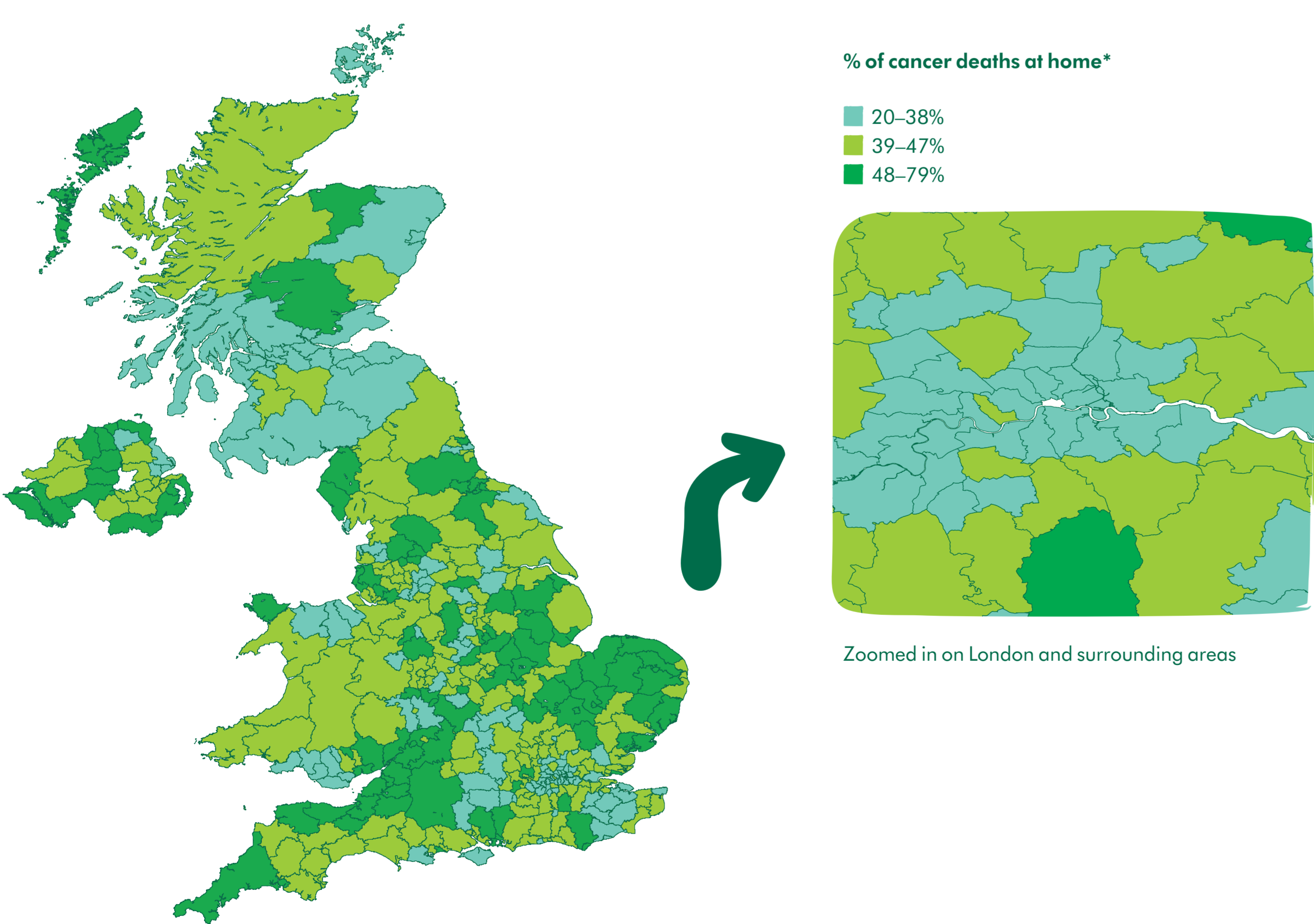
Table 1: Cancer deaths by place of death and region, UK, 2011

Regions	% of cancer deaths				Total cancer deaths*
	Home* Own residence	Care/nursing home	Hospital**	Other***	
England	29	13	42	18	128,919
North East	32	13	43	12	7,605
North West	30	12	39	19	18,564
Yorkshire and Humber	28	12	40	20	13,765
East Midlands	32	13	42	13	11,363
West Midlands	31	11	40	18	13,959
East of England	32	14	39	15	14,533
London	23	11	45	20	13,656
South East	27	13	35	24	20,906
South West	32	15	36	17	14,568
Scotland	27	6	48	18	15,457
North of Scotland	30	10	46	13	3,576
West of Scotland	28	5	48	19	7,675
South East Scotland	24	5	50	20	4,206
Wales	30	7	53	9	8,486
North Wales	27	10	50	13	2,011
South Wales	31	6	54	8	6,475
Northern Ireland	35	9	42	14	4,058

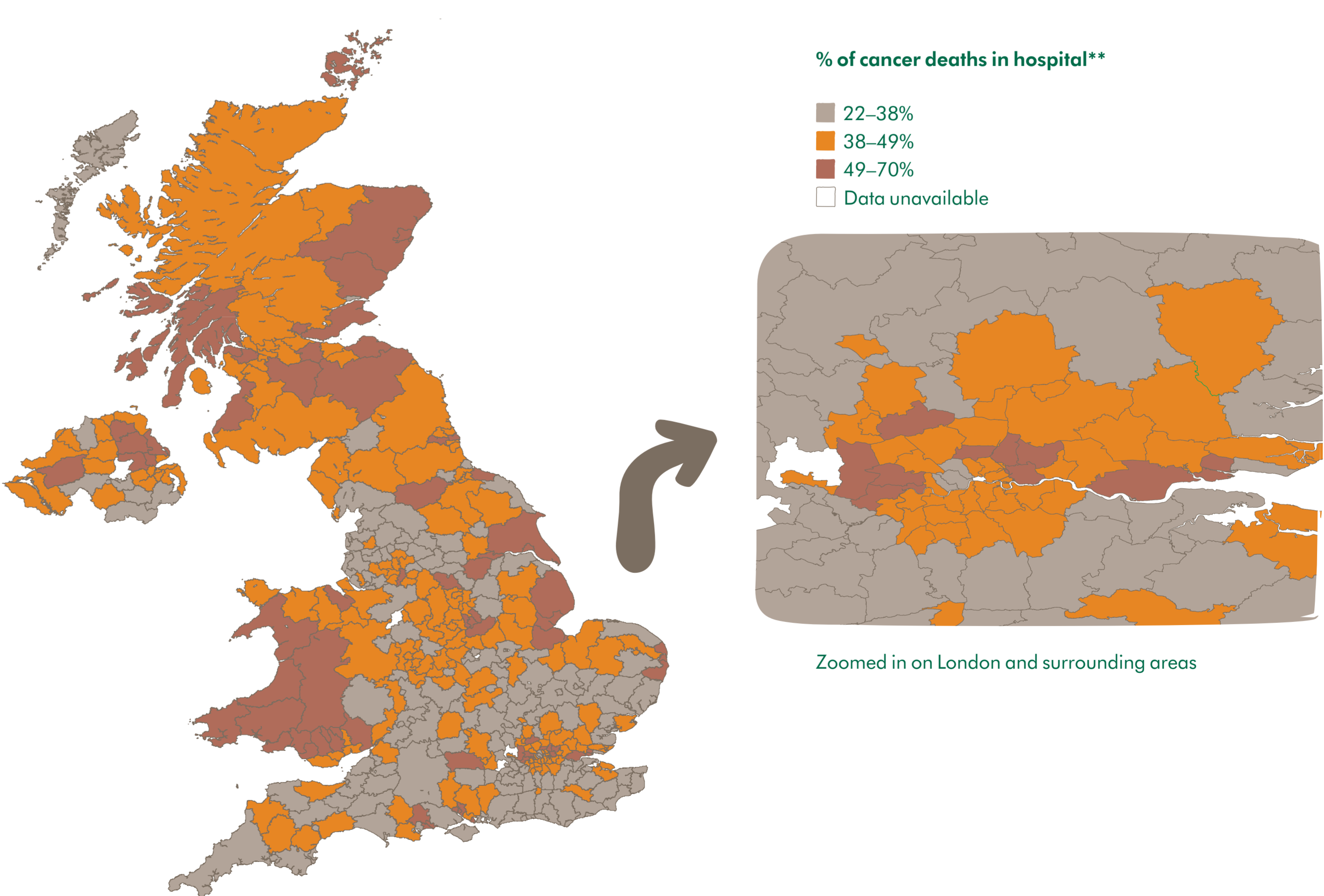
Graph 1: Proportion of cancer deaths in each age group that occur in hospital** by region, UK, 2011



Map 1: Percentage of cancer deaths that occur at home* by Local Authority , UK, 2011



Map 2 : Percentage of cancer deaths that occur in hospital** by Local Authority , UK, 2011



Data Notes and references

- * Home is defined as (own residence, care and nursing homes)
- ** Deaths in hospital include NHS and Non NHS hospitals in England and Wales and Northern Ireland and NHS only hospitals in Scotland
- *** Other includes deaths in hospices and other communal establishments
- † The figure excludes non residents

- ¹ Macmillan Feb 2010 online survey of 1,019 people living with cancer. Survey results are unweighted. UK wide survey
- ² Macmillan Cancer Support analysis on place of death for people who die from cancer (all malignant neoplasm’s ICD-10 C00-97). Data for 2011 provided by personal communication from Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England and Wales, Information Services Division Scotland (Death data from National Records of Scotland (NRS);

- data from ISD SMR01 (hospital inpatient and day case) records were used to obtain further details of place of death); Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- ³ ONS. National Bereavement Survey (VOICES) 2011. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health/1/national-bereavement-survey--voices-/2011/stb-statistical-bulletin.html> (accessed January 2013)

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