



BACKGROUND

The EUROCORE 4 study compared survival rates in a number of European countries for the most common cancers and showed that one year and five year relative survival rates in Wales were much lower than other UK countries for the period 1995-1999 for malignant melanoma of skin and cervical cancer in Wales. The Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (WCISU) have examined trends in cancer incidence, mortality and survival to determine if low survival rates still exist in Wales.

METHOD

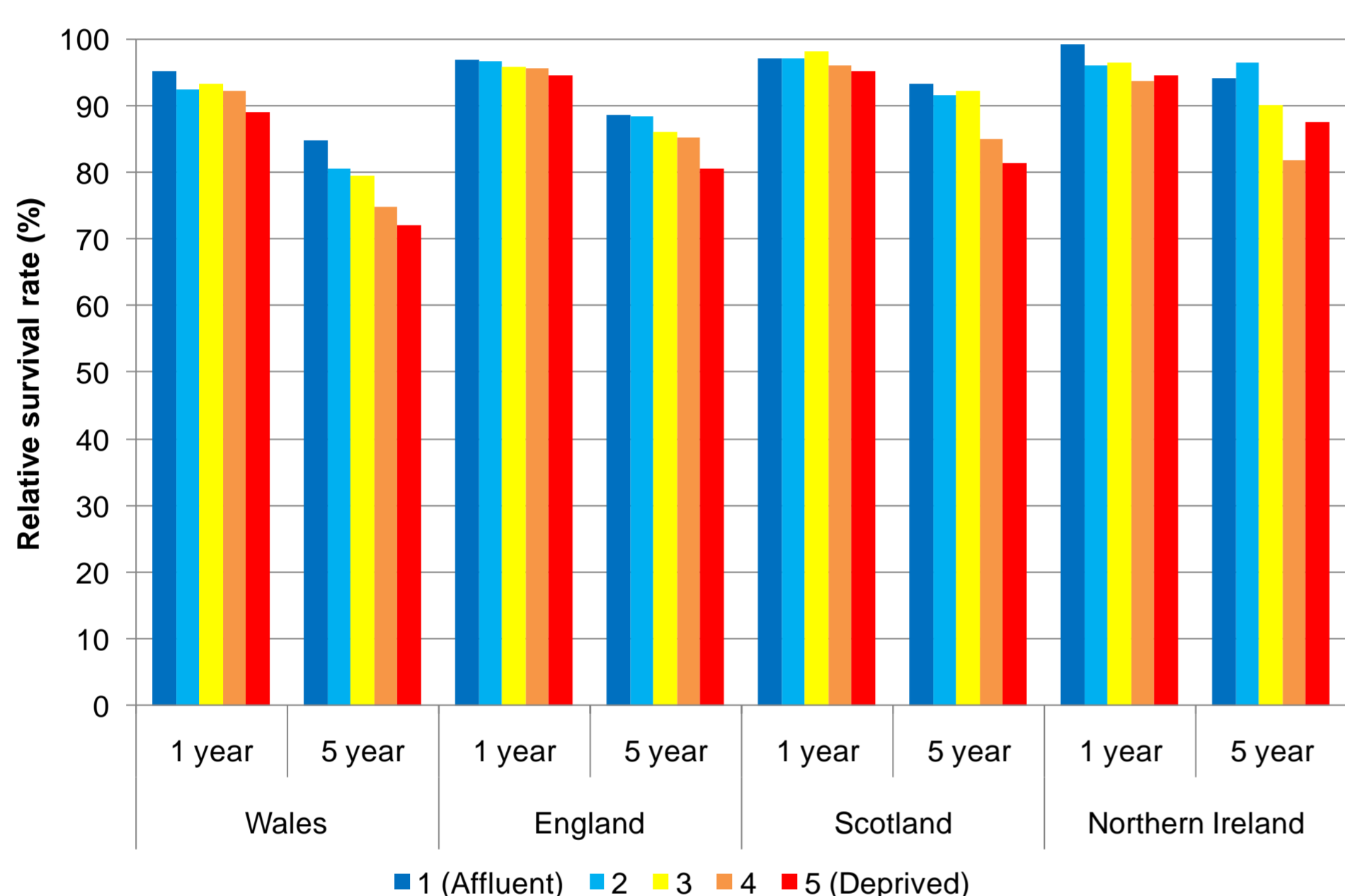
Incidence, mortality and survival rates were extracted from the United Kingdom Cancer Information Service (UKCIS) to examine the trends for the four countries of the UK: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to identify possible reasons for the low survival in Wales compared to the rest of the UK. Additionally, WCISU examined whether the survival gap was closing between Wales and the rest of the UK using more recent data from the UKCIS.

All results were taken from the UKCIS 4.3b_10x (July 2010 refresh) to compare the incidence, mortality and survival rates in the four countries.

Following the examination of trends in the UKCIS, WCISU examined survival by stage for cervical cancer for the diagnosis period 1999-2003 which was the latest period of diagnosis that was available in the UKCIS at the time of extraction of the data.

RESULTS

Figure 1 One year and five year relative survival by quintile of deprivation for malignant melanoma, UK, 1999-2003.



Incidence and mortality trends of malignant melanoma of the skin show Scotland having the highest incidence rates from 1990 onwards with Wales tending to have the highest mortality rates indicating the reason for low survival in Wales.

Survival by deprivation for malignant melanoma for the latest period of diagnosis 1999-2003 was examined and is shown in figure 1. It can be seen that those affluent compare well with other UK countries for one year relative survival. However, for those deprived, survival is under 90% whereas all other UK countries are around 95%. Five year relative survival is much lower than other UK countries for all quintiles and nearly ten percentage points lower in the deprived quintile compared with England and over fifteen percentage points lower than Northern Ireland.

WCISU are currently examining the distribution of Breslow thickness to determine if later stage at diagnosis is also a factor for low survival in Wales.

Incidence and mortality trends of cervical cancer in figure 2 show Scotland having the highest incidence rates (dark lines) from 1990 onwards with Wales tending to have the highest mortality rates (pale lines) indicating the reason for low survival in Wales.

Incidence and mortality trends show Scotland having similar incidence and mortality rates to Wales from around 2000 onwards.

Survival trends from 1990-1994 up to 1999-2003 show Wales having the lowest survival throughout all periods examined. However, the gap between Wales and other countries had decreased over the periods examined.

Survival by deprivation for cervical cancer for the latest period of diagnosis 1999-2003 was examined and those affluent experienced very similar survival to England for both one year and five year relative survival. However, there was around a 5 percentage point decrease for the most deprived quintile between England and Wales.

Survival by FIGO stage has been examined in Wales and can be seen in table 1. Five year survival rates for stage 1 cancers are consistent with published studies however, other stages are lower than that published. Similarly the distribution of stage for cervical cancer is much higher for stage 4 than in other studies.

Figure 2 Cervical cancer incidence and mortality trends in the UK, 1990-1994 up to 2004-2008

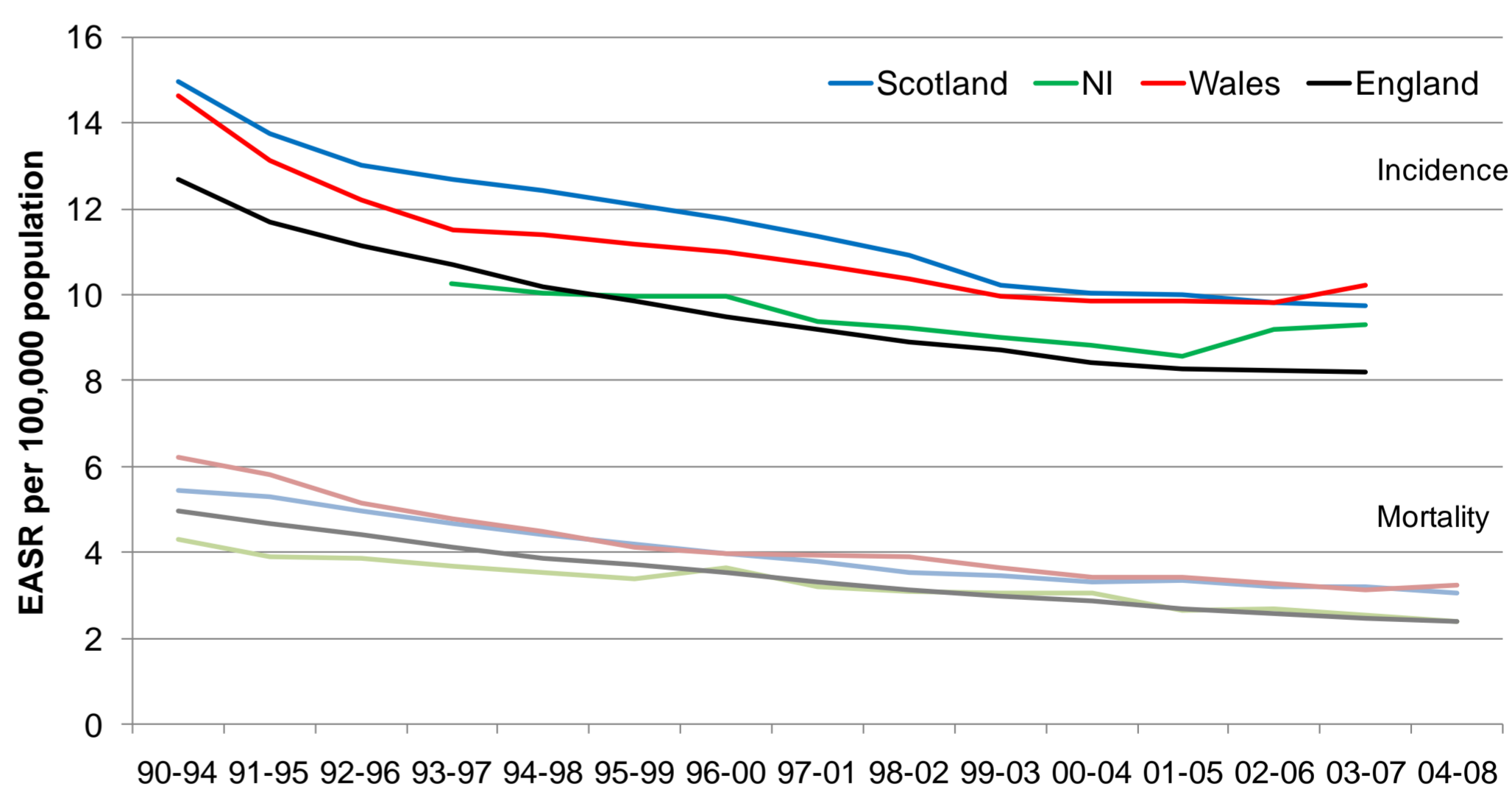


Table 1 FIGO stage distribution and 5 year relative survival (RS %)

FIGO	1	2	3	4	Unknown	Total
Cases	372	154	82	92	85	785
%	47.4	19.6	10.4	11.7	10.8	100
5 year RS	91.4	48.3	32.8	5.0	36.8	63.4

CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, Scotland tends to have the highest incidence rates and Wales has the highest mortality rates for both cancers in the UK with poor survival in Wales up to 2003. However, Wales tends to have similar incidence and mortality rates to Scotland post 2000 so it will be interesting to compare five year survival rates for these diagnosis periods when available. Further work on cervical cancer has shown worse survival in Wales for late stage cancers hinting that treatment and late presentation may be the reasons for low survival in Wales. (Full report: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/242/Cervix%26MelanomaSurvival.pdf>)