

# Cancer Beliefs and Behaviors Survey in Turkey

by Turkish Association for Cancer Research & Control

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# Background & Aim

## WCD Target 5

Stigma associated with cancer will be reduced, and damaging myths and misconceptions about the disease will be dispelled”.

## Aim

To investigate the cancer related beliefs and behaviors in Turkey

## Method

A face to face survey, 1234 people representing the different socioeconomic groups at 15-65 years of age from 15 different districts, during January-February 2014.

Study population was selected by multistep, semi-random sampling method and survey was conducted by GfK Turkey Omnibus study.

Beliefs regarding the magnitude of cancer; Etiology, treatability, risk behaviors (including smoking, eating, physical exercise, sun exposure), screening practices were asked in addition to personal characteristics. The results were analyzed and compared with global facts.

# Main Results

**Number 1 Health problem:** 53% Cancer; 11% AIDS; 7% Heart diseases

**Main factors contributing to cancer development :** Smoking 97%, alcohol 93%, stress 90%, infectious causes 89%, sun exposure 87%, mobile phone 84%, obesity 70%, fatty diet 68%, limited vegetable intake 65%, limited fruit intake 63%, limited grain intake 60%, limited exercise 58%, red meat 48%, tap water 44%.

# Main Results

**Risk Factors:** Smoking rate 41%; Awareness on sun exposure & cancer connection 51%; Exercising (>3 times a week) 14%.

**Screening behavior:** Mammography rate (> 40 yrs) 32%; PAP smear rate (>18 yrs) 30.5%; Prostate Ca screened (>50 yrs) 2.5%; Colorectal Ca screened (>50 yrs) 6%.

**Having a cancer & Treatment:** 31% they could have cancer in future; 21% they will die if they get cancer; 39% they will not die from cancer, 40% was not sure. 76% cancer is treatable. Tx decision: 57% doctor must decide; to the treatment, 36% they have to participate in the decision making.

**Information sources:** Friends 53%, internet 46%, TV 41%, 32% hospital & physician, 16% newspaper & magazine.

## Conclusion

- The awareness is increasing, however, still needs investment on public knowledge and practice.
- Screening rates are getting better but still lower than levels in developed countries.
- Based on these factors, addressing the cancer by global or national campaigns will contribute the better understanding of cancer myths public.
- A successful implementation of cancer control plans require more focus on beliefs and behavior.
- Stigma associated with cancer must be reduced, and damaging myths and misconceptions about the disease must be dispelled.