

MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE CANCER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (CANSA)

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Attention: News Editor

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International survey highlights cancer perceptions

World Cancer Day, observed by the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) and led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), aims to mobilise urgent action from individuals, governments and the global cancer community to close the clear and unacceptable gaps in cancer risk awareness between higher and lower socioeconomic groups.

To mark the 20th anniversary of World Cancer Day, the UICC commissioned a global survey to form an up-to-date picture of the public's experiences, views and behaviours around cancer. Conducted by Ipsos (independent market research company), the survey includes more than 15,000 adults across 20 countries (including South Africa) in the first multi-country public survey on cancer perceptions in a decade. The results, detailed in UICC's report released 4 February 2020, *International Public Opinion Survey on Cancer 2020: What people feel, think and believe about cancer today*, indicates a clear divide between higher and lower socioeconomic groups when it comes to knowledge and awareness of cancer risks and as a result, the practice of behaviours to limit such risk.

The results show that there is generally a high level of cancer awareness among the surveyed population globally. Tobacco use (63%), exposure to harmful UV rays (54%) and exposure to tobacco smoke from others (50%) appear to be the most recognised factors that can increase a person's risk of cancer. Meanwhile, a lack of exercise (28%), exposure to certain viruses or bacteria (28%), being overweight (29%) and drinking alcohol (35%), appear to be the least recognised cancer risk factors.

https://www.cansa.org.za/files/2020/01/WCD20_IntPublicOpinionPoll_Report_FA_Screen.pdf

Elize Joubert, CANSA CEO says "The fact that lack of exercise and being overweight are not clearly recognised as cancer risk factors is of great concern within the South African context, and we'll have to redouble our efforts at making sure this information reaches all sectors of the public. Over the past 15 years research indicates high levels of physical inactivity across the lifespan. A recent study found that only 57% of children aged 8-14 years were moderately active while 31% did not meet the recommendation of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Physical activity levels tend to decrease with age, and this has been shown in other studies with adolescents and young adults, as well as older adults in South Africa. Even more concerning is that physical inactivity has been associated with colon and breast cancers. In South Africa there is an alarming increase in the amount of overweight and obese individuals, with more than 29% of men and 56% of women classified as being overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of several cancers, including breast (in women post-menopause), endometrium (the lining of the uterus), oesophagus, pancreas, and kidney, among others." *

The poll also revealed that an overwhelming 84% of individuals surveyed felt that governments should be taking action in relation to cancer while nearly a third of individuals surveyed believed that it's most important for governments to improve the affordability of cancer services – a measure notably emphasised by people surveyed in lower middle-income countries.

To help raise greater awareness around cancer and to support health-promoting behaviours so that no one gets left behind, CANSA and the UICC are calling for all governments to prioritise cancer awareness-raising through progressive health policies and education to support healthy decisions and health-promoting behaviour, with a focus on engaging lower socioeconomic populations. Further to ensure the public is provided with up-to-date information on cancer risks and how to lower their cancer risk and importantly that the information is presented and delivered in a way that is accessible by individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

As part of World Cancer Day's 'I Am and I Will' campaign, which calls on each person to make a commitment – big or small – to lowering their cancer risk, CANSA and the UICC recommend that everyone:

- ✓ Use World Cancer Day as an opportunity to improve understanding of cancer risk factors and share knowledge with others – visit www.cansa.org.za for more information <https://www.cansa.org.za/posters-world-cancer-day-who-are-you-and-what-will-you-do/>
- ✓ Make a personal commitment to lower cancer risks like quitting smoking, eating healthily, exercising regularly, and using sunscreen <https://www.cansa.org.za/reduce-your-cancer-risk/> <https://cansa-active.org.za/>
- ✓ Take advantage of what the health system can provide, including getting a check-up, getting screened, and getting vaccinated – visit local CANSA Care Centres for screening. <https://www.cansa.org.za/cansas-care-support/cancer-risk-reduction-screening/> <https://www.cansa.org.za/cansa-care-centres-contact-details/>
- ✓ CANSA encourages sport activities as exercise can lower cancer risk by 30 to 40%. Take part in CANSA events such as Gijima for CANSA (a 5km fun run) or join our CANSA Active team and raise funds for CANSA while taking part in the sport close to your heart. (<https://www.cansa.org.za/gijima-for-cansa-events/>) (<https://cansa-active.org.za/>), (<https://www.cansa.org.za/category/recent-posts/prevention-early-detection/world-cancer-day-4-feb/>)

* <https://www.cansa.org.za/be-physically-active-maintain-a-healthy-weight/>

Note on the International Public Opinion Survey on Cancer methodology

The International Public Opinion Survey on Cancer is the international online survey conducted from 25 October to 25 November 2019 on a total sample of 15,427 adults. The survey was conducted via the Ipsos Online Panel system in 20 countries around the world: Australia, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Kenya, the Philippines Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the USA. More detailed methodology can be found in the report.

(For more information, please contact Lucy Balona, Head: Marketing and Communication at CANSA at email lbalona@cansa.org.za. Call 011 616 7662 or mobile 082 459 5230.)

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Visit www.cansa.org.za or contact the nearest [CANSA Care Centre](#), call CANSA toll-free 0800 22 66 22 or email: info@cansa.org.za. In addition to [online resources and Facebook support groups](#), CANSA offers multi-lingual support on WhatsApp: 072 197 9305 for English and Afrikaans and 071 867 3530 for Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho and Siswati. Follow CANSA on Twitter: [@CANSA](https://twitter.com/CANSA) (<http://www.twitter.com/CANSA>), join CANSA on Facebook: [CANSA The Cancer Association of South Africa](#) and follow CANSA on Instagram: [@cancerassociationofsouthafrica](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

ABOUT CANSA (editor's notes)

CANSA offers a unique integrated service to the public and to all people affected by cancer. CANSA is a leading role-player in cancer research and the scientific findings and knowledge gained from our research are used to realign our health programmes, as well as strengthen our watchdog role to the greater benefit of the public. Our health programmes comprise health and education campaigns; CANSA Care Centres that offer a wide range of care and support services to those affected by cancer; stoma and other clinical support and organisational management; medical equipment hire, as well as a toll-free line to offer information and support. We also supply patient care and support in the form of 12 CANSA Care Homes in the main metropolitan areas for out-of-town cancer patients and CANSA-TLC lodging for parents and guardians of children undergoing cancer treatment.

About the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is the largest and oldest international cancer-fighting organisation. Founded in Geneva in 1933, UICC has over 1,150 member organisations in 173 countries. It enjoys consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UICC has over 50 partners, including associations, companies and foundations committed to the fight against cancer. UICC is a founding member of the NCD Alliance, the McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer and the International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP) and established the City Cancer Challenge Foundation in January 2019.

UICC's mission is to both unite and support the cancer community in its efforts to reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity and ensure that cancer control remains a priority on the global health and development agenda. It pursues these goals by bringing together global leaders through innovative and far-reaching cancer-control events and initiatives, building capacities to meet regional needs and developing awareness campaigns.