

3.2 Psychosocial impacts and adjustments after diagnosis and treatments

Psychosocial impacts of breast cancer

Over 50% reported acceptance with a positive attitude or acceptance with calm to fight their affliction. About one quarter felt depressed when they were informed of their diagnosis, 17% reported that they could not accept they had breast cancer and 4% accepted the diagnosis with anger or resentment (Table 3.2.1).

Table 3.2.1 Psychosocial impacts of breast cancer in 1,444 breast cancer patients

	Number (%)
Feelings at time of breast cancer diagnosis	
Accept with positive attitude to fight	417 (28.9%)
Accept with calm	370 (25.6%)
Accept with depression	354 (24.5%)
Cannot accept (cannot be true)	245 (17.0%)
Accept with anger (something must be wrong)	58 (4.0%)
Feelings after breast cancer treatments	
Life was not fair	719 (49.8%)
Cancer was an alarm caught me by surprise	375 (26.0%)
Cancer took away something from me	263 (18.2%)
Cancer changed my value system	87 (6.0%)
Change in outlook	
Positive	747 (51.7%)
Negative	72 (5.0%)
Indifferent	625 (43.3%)
Change in self-image	
Positive	495 (34.3%)
Negative	103 (7.1%)
Indifferent	846 (58.6%)

Feelings after breast cancer treatments

After breast cancer treatments, the majority (49.8%) felt that life was not fair, 26.0% felt the cancer was an alarm which caught them by surprise, 18.2% felt that cancer took away something from them and 6.0% felt that cancer changed their value system (Table 3.2.1).

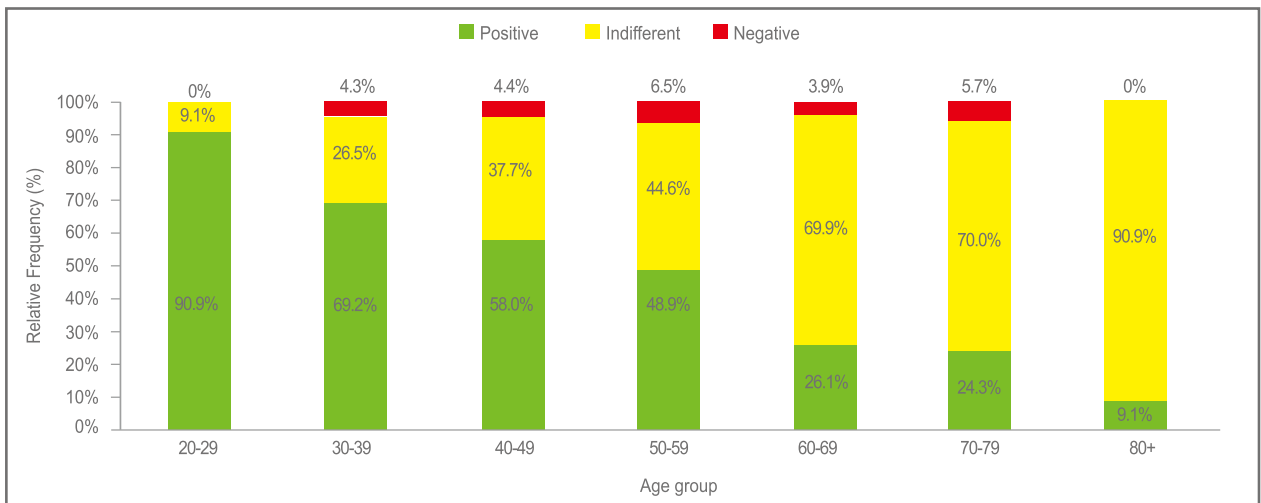
Changes in outlook and self-image

Over 50% reported a positive change in outlook, 5% reported a negative change and 43.3% reported no change in outlook. About one-third reported a positive change in self-image, 7.1% reported a negative change in self-image and 58.6% reported no change in self-image (Table 3.2.1).



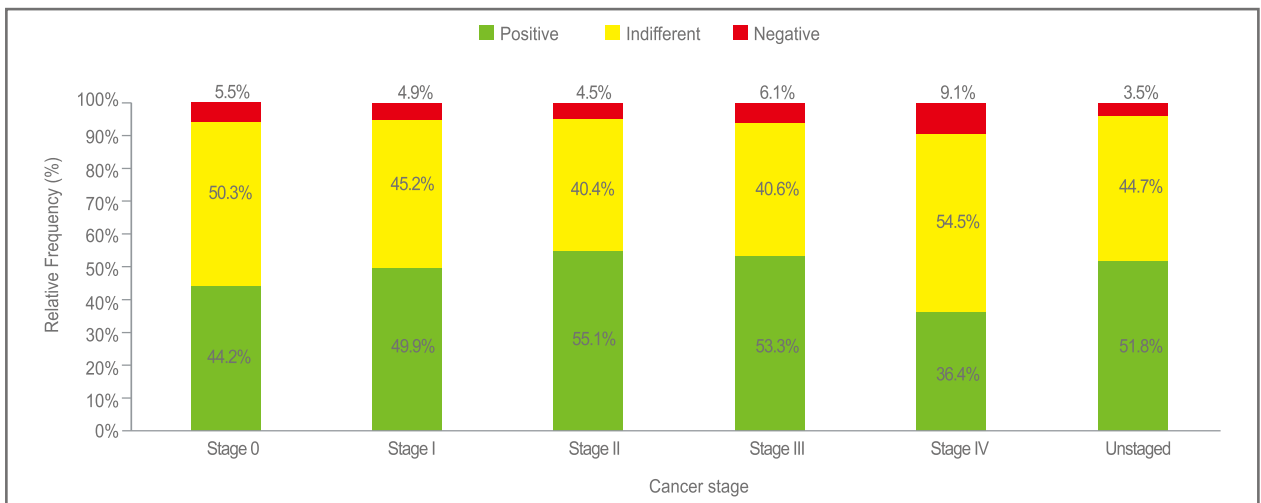
The pattern of changes in outlook in different age groups was shown in Figure 3.2.1. Positive changes in outlook were highest in the youngest age group and lowest in the oldest age group (90.9% in the age group of 20-29 vs. 9.1% in the age group of 80+). The proportion having indifference in outlook increased over age. The proportions of having negative changes in outlook were modest across all age groups ranging from 0% to 6.5%.

Figure 3.2.1 Change in outlook by age group



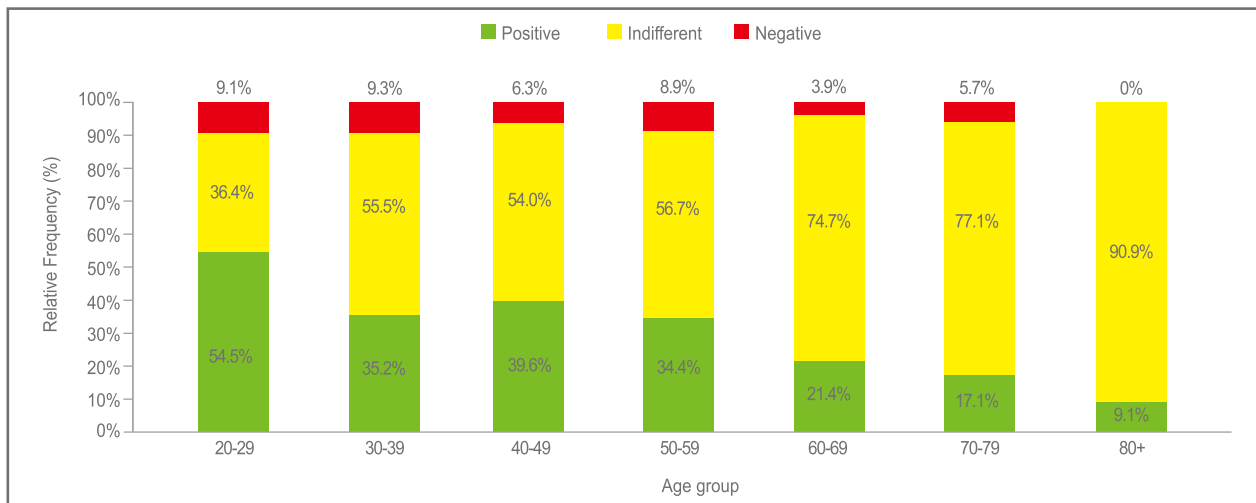
Patterns of change in outlook did not vary significantly in different stages of cancer. The proportion of positive changes in outlook ranged from 36.4% to 55.1%, while the proportion of negative changes in outlook ranged from 3.5% to 6.1% (Figure 3.2.2).

Figure 3.2.2 Change in outlook by cancer stage



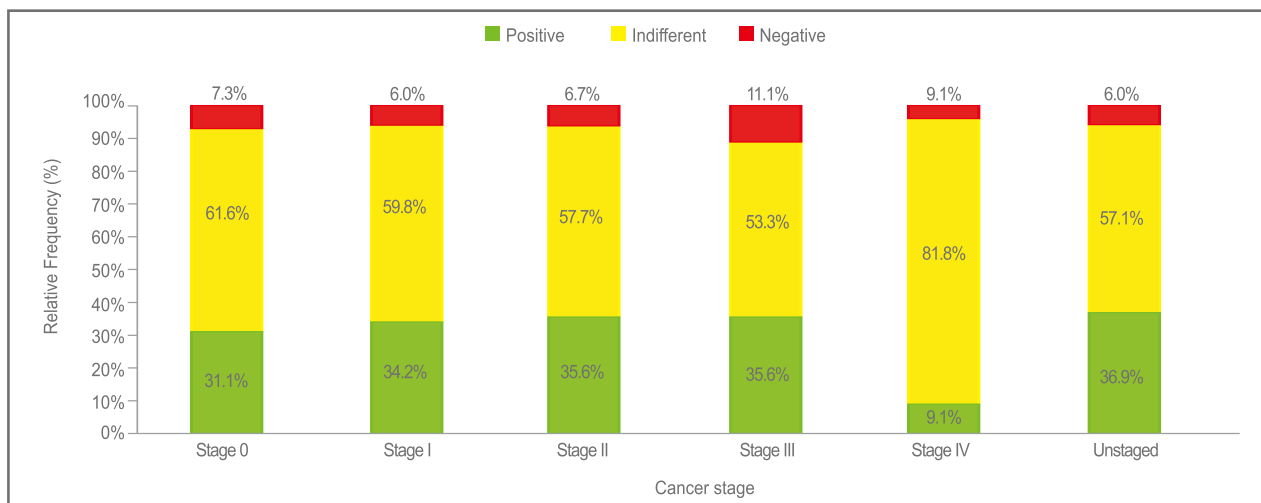
The pattern of changes in self-image in different age groups was illustrated in Figure 3.2.3. More people in the younger age groups had positive changes in self-image, compared with the older age group. The proportion of having indifference in self-image increased over age. The proportions of having negative changes in self-image were small across all age groups ranging from 0% to 9.3%.

Figure 3.2.3 Change in self-image by age group



The proportion of positive changes in self-image did not vary greatly in cancer stages 0-III but did so in cancer stage IV. The proportion of negative changes in self-image varied from 6.0% to 11.1% among the cases of all cancer stages (0 to IV) (Figure 3.2.4).

Figure 3.2.4 Change in self-image by cancer stage



Psychosocial adjustments and coping strategies

Out of the 1,444 patient cohort, 76% reported lifestyle modifications after breast cancer diagnosis. Psychosocial adjustments included: 61.0% took more exercise, 26.9% took health food supplements, 68.8% reported changes in diet and 37.2% reported they had quit their job or reduced their workload as coping strategies (Table 3.2.2).

Table 3.2.2 Psychosocial adjustments and coping strategies for survivorship

	Number (%)
Types of changed lifestyles[†]	
Do more exercise	881 (61.0%)
Take health supplements	388 (26.9%)
Change in diets	993 (68.8%)
Quit job	147 (10.2%)
Reduce workload	390 (27.0%)
Way of managing negative emotions[†]	
Direct verbal expression	745 (51.6%)
Divert my focus	360 (24.9%)
Ignore it	224 (15.5%)
Feel depressed	91 (6.3%)
Others	65 (4.5%)
Level of worries about recurrence	
Never	193 (13.4%)
Seldom	325 (22.5%)
Sometimes	736 (51.0%)
Always	189 (13.1%)

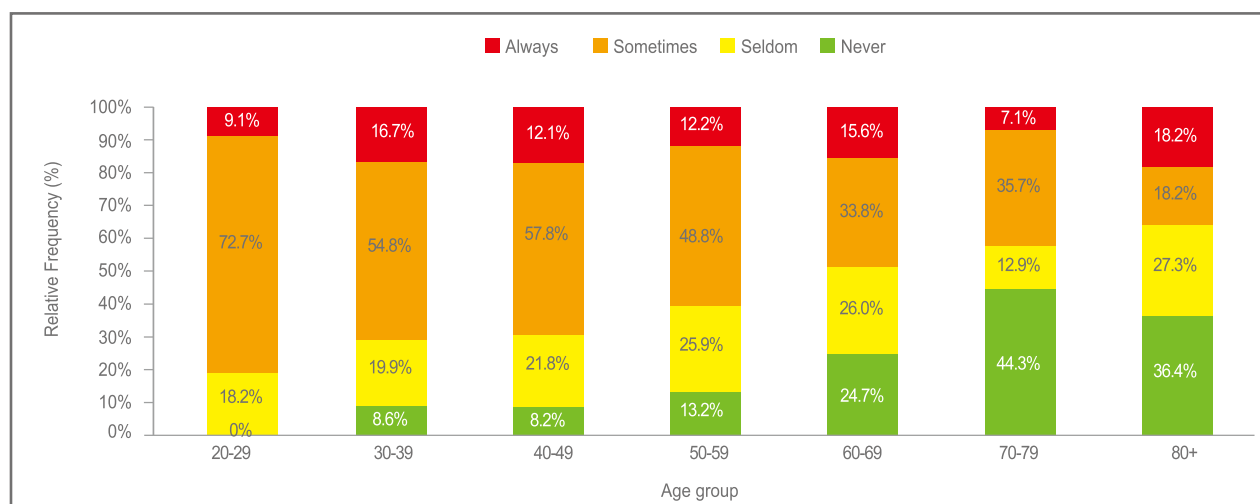
[†]Percentages might exceed 100% because multiple options might be applied

Levels of worry about recurrence

Over 60% of the patients always or sometimes worried about recurrence, 22.5% seldom worried about recurrence and 13.4% never worried about recurrence.

The level of worry decreased over age. Levels of worry about recurrence were highest in the youngest patients (81.8% reported they always/sometimes worried about recurrence) and lowest in the oldest patients (36.4% always/sometimes worried about recurrence) (Figure 3.2.5).

Figure 3.2.5 Level of worries about recurrence by age group



Levels of worry did not vary greatly in cancer stages from stage 0 to stage III. In cancer stage IV, the vast majority (90.0%) always or sometimes worried about recurrence (Figure 3.2.6).

Figure 3.2.6 Level of worries about recurrence by cancer stage

