



Decline and incomplete recovery in cancer diagnoses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium: a year-long, population-level analysis

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Decline and incomplete recovery in cancer diagnoses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium: a year-long, population-level analysis

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Belgian Cancer Registry, Brussels, Belgium

Now updated to August 2021

Introduction



4 Feb 2020

- first confirmed COVID-19 case in Belgium



14 March 2020

- all "non-essential" medical services halted



16 March 2020

- Population screening breast/cervix/colorectal halted
- Gradual resumption from mid-May



July 2020

- pathology labs report decrease in samples, particularly from cancer screening



Delayed diagnosis?

Methods

- Expedited delivery from Pathology Laboratories in 2020-2021
 - Raw 2019 data treated the same way
- Ratio: incidence 2020 (or 2021) / incidence 2019
- Limitation: no hospital registrations yet



First wave had major impact

Comparison of number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium from January 2020-August 2021 compared with the same period in 2019 (%)

Belgian Cancer Registry



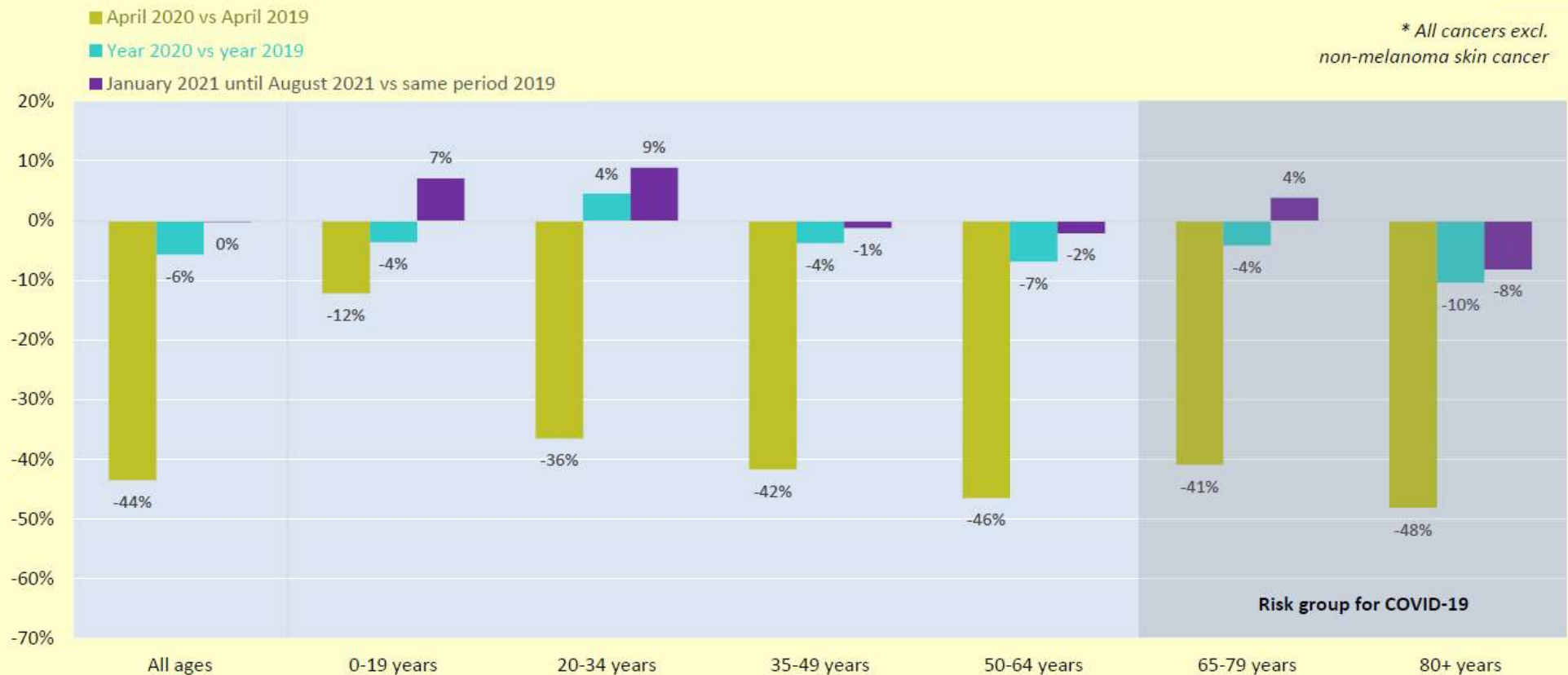
The daily results of the number of new cancer diagnoses were calculated based on a 14-day moving average.



Decline in diagnosis by age group

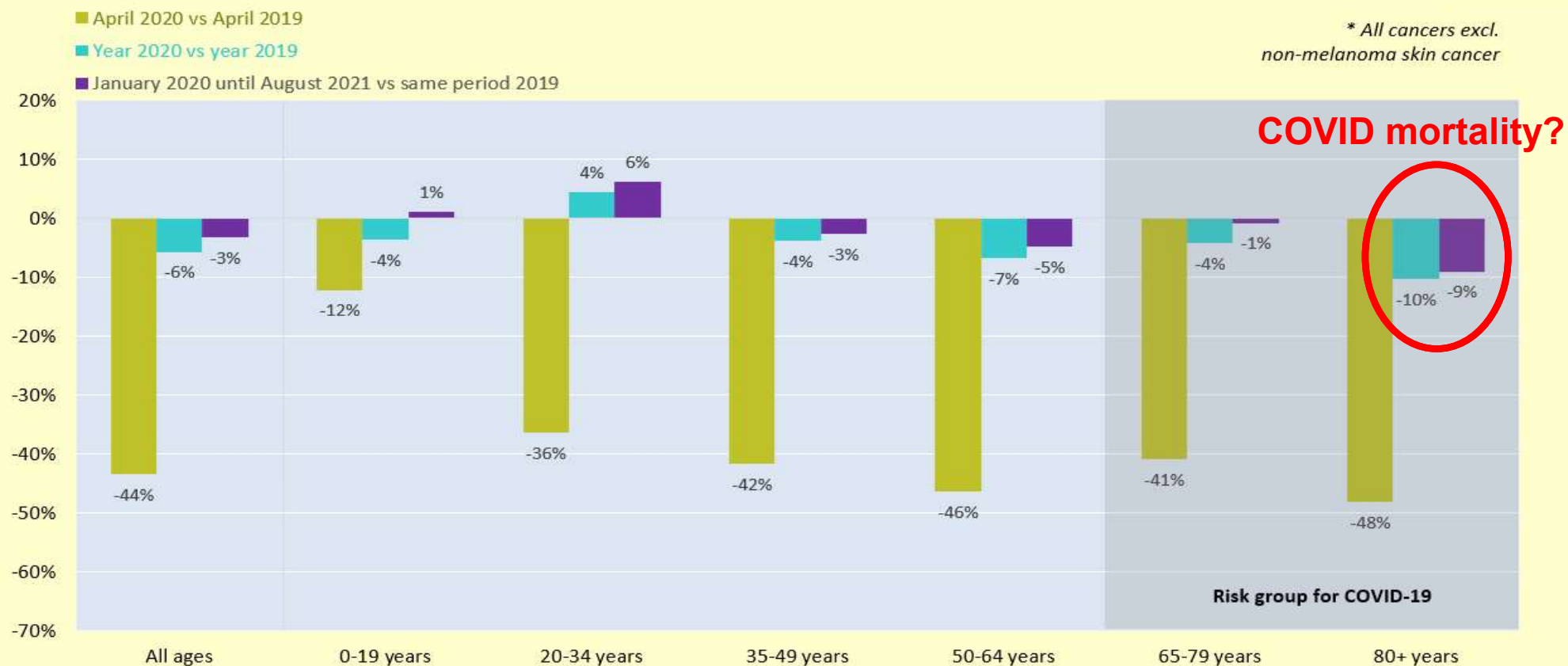
Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by age group in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)

Belgian Cancer Registry



Decline in diagnosis by age group

Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by age group in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)

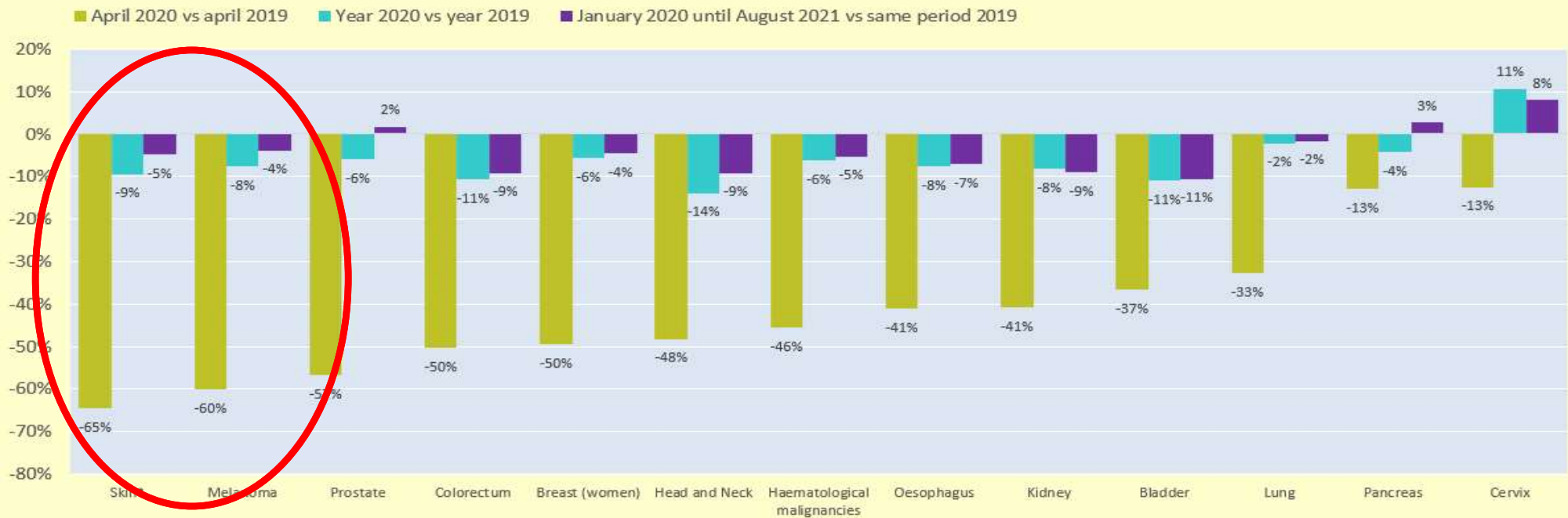


Decline in diagnosis by tumor type

Belgian Cancer Registry



Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by tumour type in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)



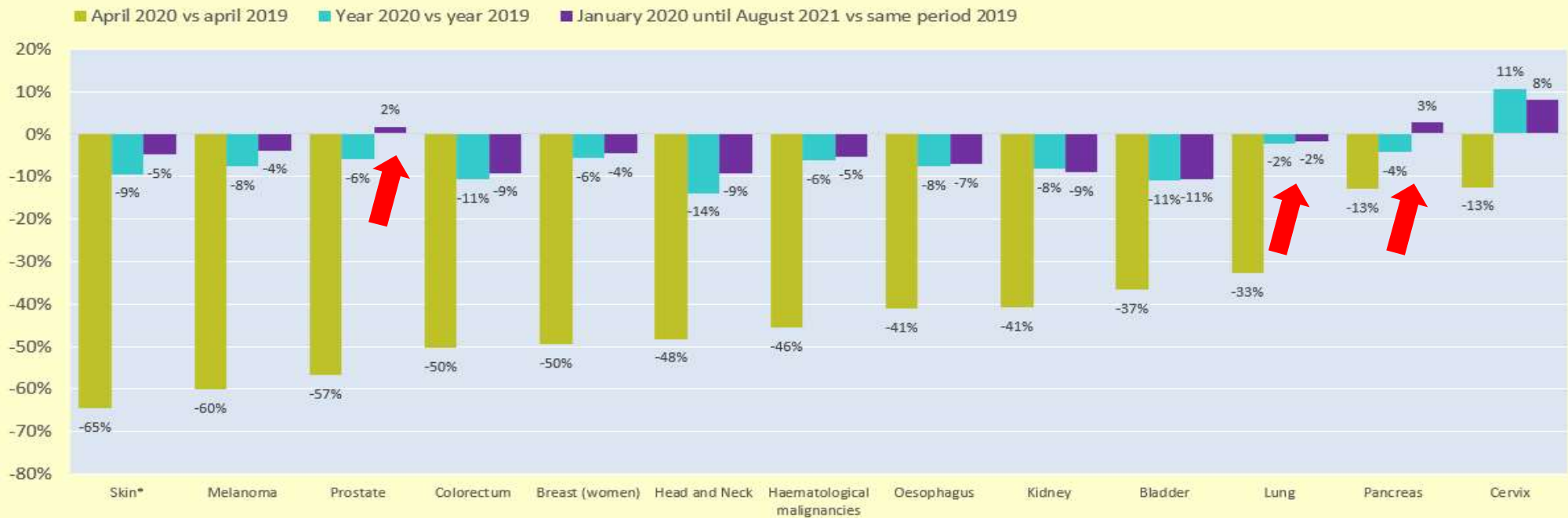
* Non-melanoma skin cancer

Belgian Cancer Registry



Decline in diagnosis by tumor type

Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by tumour type in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)



* Non-melanoma skin cancer

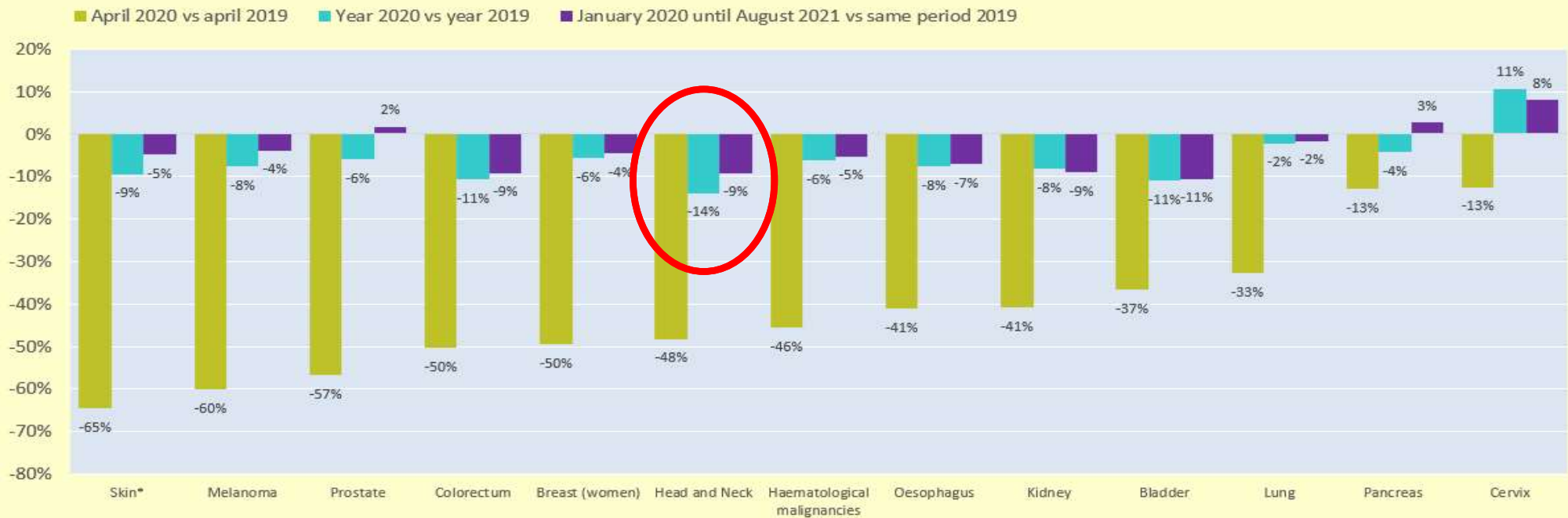
Belgian Cancer Registry

Decline in diagnosis by tumor type

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Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by tumour type in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)



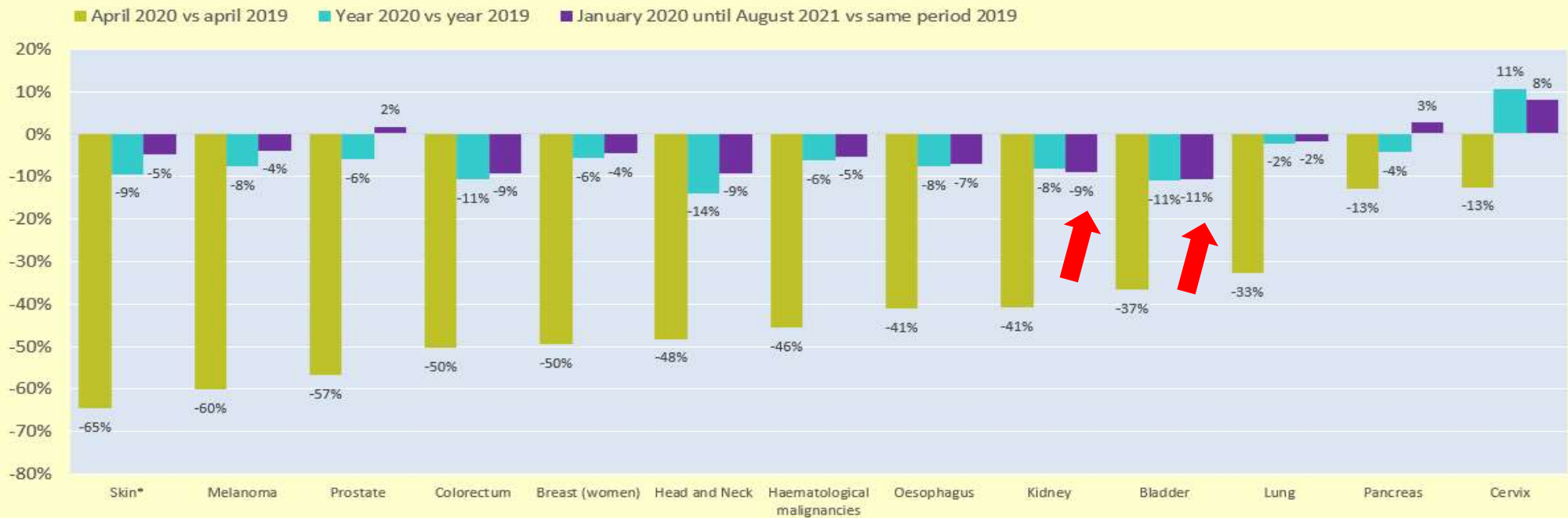
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Belgian Cancer Registry



Decline in diagnosis by tumor type

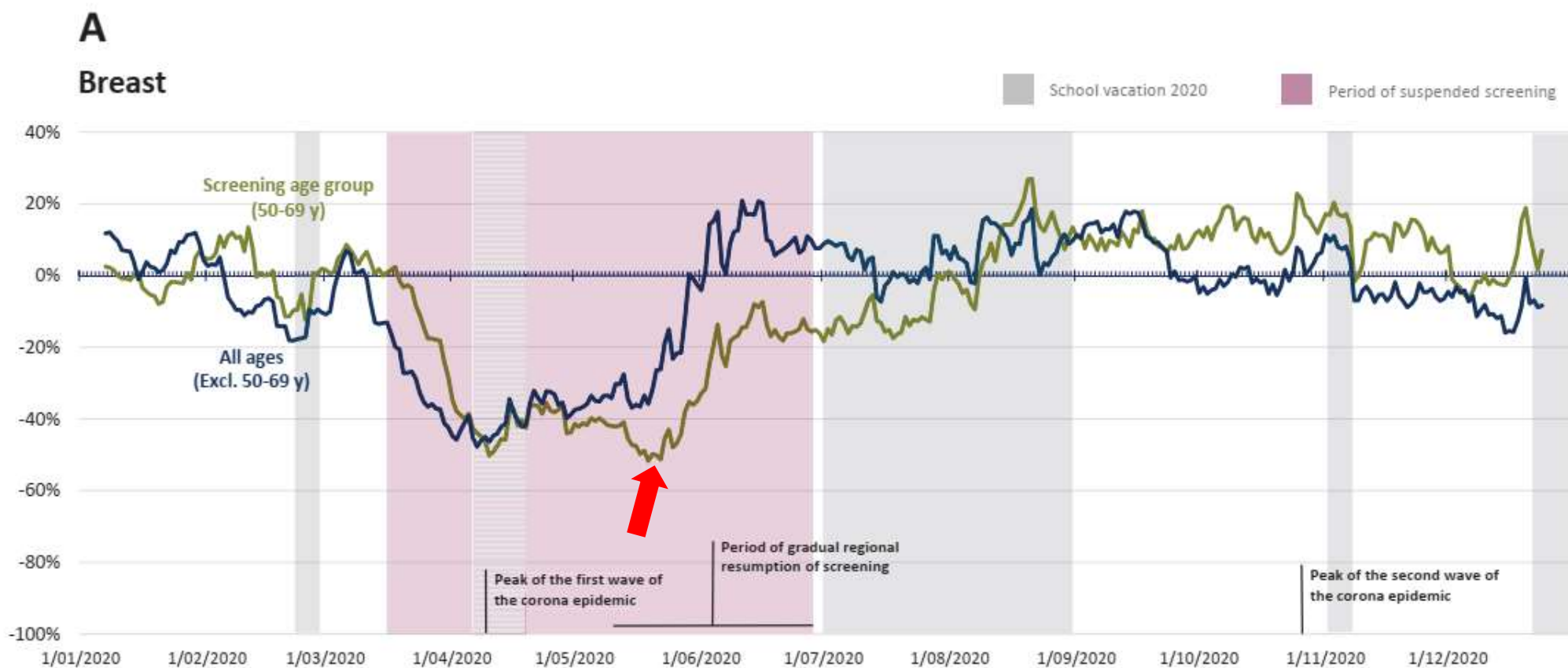
Decline in the number of new cancer diagnoses* in Belgium by tumour type in 2020 and 2021 relative to the same period in 2019 (%)



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Belgian Cancer Registry

Impact on screening cancers: Breast (2020 only)



Belgian Cancer Registry



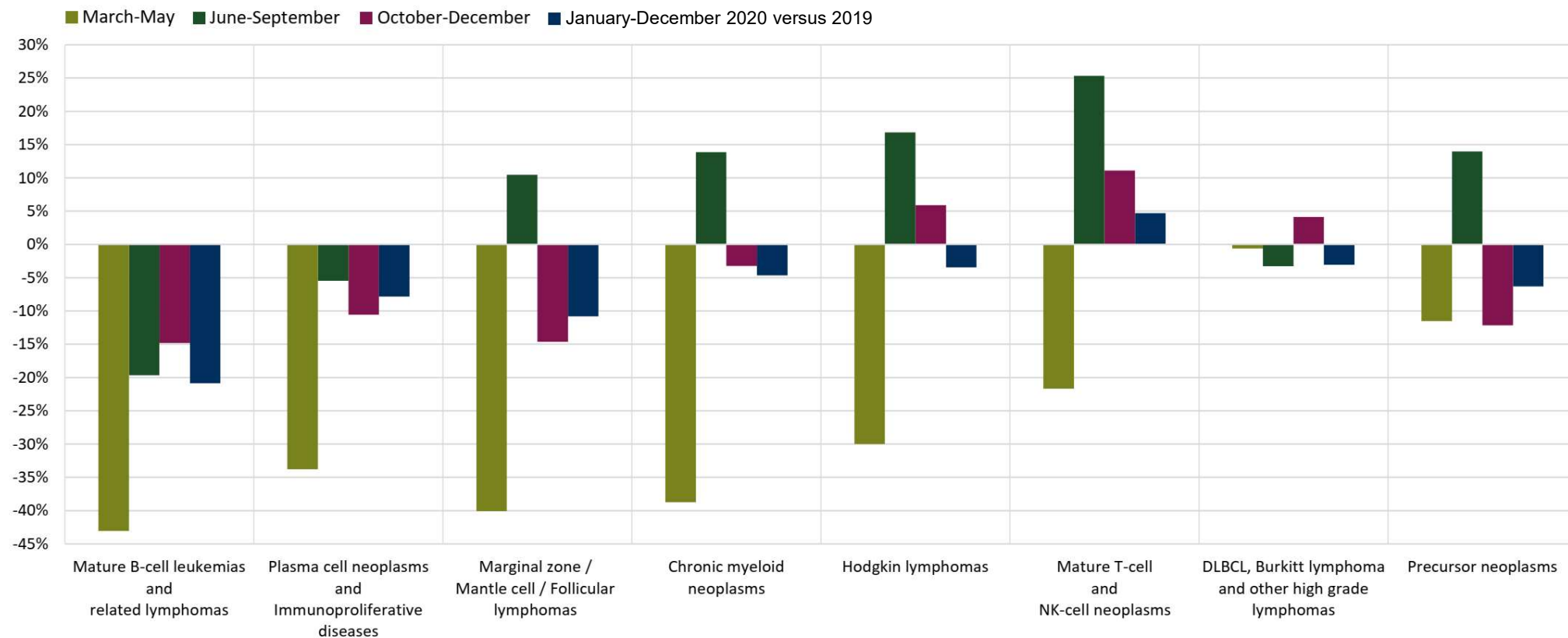
Impact on screening cancers: Colorectal (2020 only)



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Impact on hematological malignancies (2020 only)



Next steps?

- Stage at diagnosis → is there a trend toward higher stages?
- Treatment schemes →
 - Shift to higher use of neo-adjuvant therapy?
 - Longer time to from diagnosis to treatment?
 - Longer time between treatment modalities?
- Impact on survival?
 - Incidence/treatment during pandemic?
 - Cancer patients with COVID-19?
- Other?

Questions?

