

FAWCO
FOUNDATION



FAWCO

Inspiring Women Worldwide



FAUSA



FAWCO Interim Meeting
Malta
Celebrating 95 Years!
March 20-22, 2026

Stitching Comfort

*Crafting Support for Breast Cancer Awareness
and Recovery*

Breast Cancer: A Brief Overview

Most commonly diagnosed cancer worldwide

2022: > 2.3 million new cases and roughly 670,000 deaths in 2022

2050: expectation that new cases to rise by 38% to 3.2 million, and deaths by 68% to 1.1 million annually

Leading cause of cancer death among women globally, accounting for 1 in 4 cancer cases in females.

While incidence is higher in developed nations, mortality is disproportionately higher in low- and middle-income countries.

Breast Cancer: Global Prevalence



Belgium has one of the highest prevalences of breast cancer in the world - 112.3 to 176.4 per 100,000 women

Followed by Western Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand

Countries with the most breast cancer cases per year: China, US, India, Brazil and Japan

Top 5 countries with the highest number of breast cancer deaths: India, China, US, Indonesia, Brazil



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Breast Cancer: Screening Programs

Denmark, Finland, and Sweden: ranked the highest in Europe for participation (80%+ in 2021-2023)

United States and Japan: leading in advanced screening technologies, including AI, MRI for high-risk patients, and comprehensive, long-range screening (45–75 years).

Australia: recognized as a global leader in cancer survival; proactive *BreastScreen Australia* program for women aged 50–74

Key Factors for "Best" Programs: high participation rates, early detection & low mortality, technological integration and comprehensive coverage

Breast Cancer: Survival Rates

United States, Australia, and certain European countries - consistently report the highest 5-year breast cancer relative survival rates, often exceeding 90%

International and Global Accreditations, e.g.:

- Senologic International Society (SIS) Accreditation
- Joint Commission International (JCI)
- National Consortium of Breast Centers (NCBC): Provides the Certified Participant in the National Quality Measures for Breast Centers™

European Accreditations, e.g.:

- EUSOMA Accreditation: Providing clinical guidelines, promoting multidisciplinary care, and offering a voluntary certification program for breast centres based on quality indicators
- European Quality Assurance Scheme for Breast Cancer Services (ECIBC)
- Country specific

Breast Cancer: Men (*)

- Still quite rare: < 1% of all breast cancer cases
- However, a very serious condition due to late diagnosis
- Key risk factors include family history, genetic mutations, age, liver disease, hormone therapy treatment, etc
- Symptoms include a lump or swelling in the breast, redness or irritation of the skin in the breast, nipple discharge or retraction of the nipple
- Treatment: surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, and targeted therapy
- (*)Source: CDC

What can you, I and our FAWCO clubs do in creating awareness and support of breast cancer in our environments?

History of Breast Cancer support in FAWCO



20 YEARS history in FAWCO!

Origin of the heart pillows:

- Origin traced to the Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Janet Kramer-Mai had surgery for breast cancer in 2002. Her aunts sewed and gave her a pillow post-surgery to fit under her arm to relieve the discomfort of the surgery. Following her recovery, Janet introduced the pillow to the hospital from where it continued to grow.
- Nancy Friis-Jensen, a Danish nurse, met Janet at a meeting in the US, and was so impressed with the idea of the heart-shaped pillow that she brought the design to AWC Denmark in 2006.



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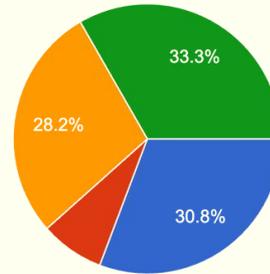
Heart Pillow Project – Jan 2026

Question & Responses

66% response

Does your club have a Heart Pillow Project?

39 responses



- Yes, it is an active project for our club
- Not currently, but we have in the past
- No, but we would like to learn more
- No, this is not a focus for our club at the moment

What we learned

- A small group of clubs, mainly in Europe, run this as a regular program
- There are clubs interested in learning about the program. There is an opportunity to expand its reach and impact.

Next Step

- Put together standard packet of information to share with interested clubs. Include in shared practices
- Host workshop for IM Malta (March) and present at TLC (April)
- Manage as a FAWCO-wide initiative within the Health Team

What is FAWCO doing to support Breast Cancer?

FAWCO Health Team:

- Various articles addressing the topic

FAWCO clubs:

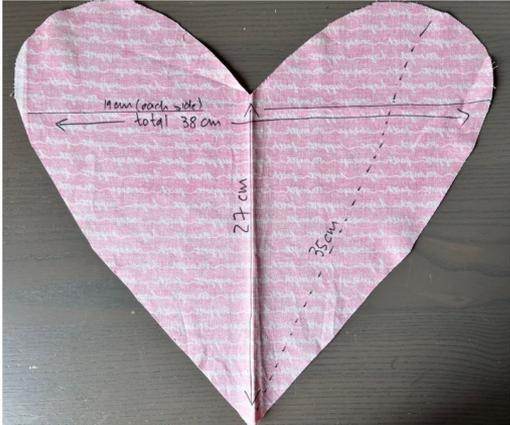
- Lectures on Breast Cancer
- Heart Pillow Projects
- Drain Bottle Bags
- Breast Prosthesis
- Chemotherapy Port Pillows
- Breast Cancer Lounges
- Partner with other Organizations



Fundraising Ideas



How to make a pillow?



A Few Final Words

*Dear Caring Hearts,
I would like to sincerely thank you for your dedication. After my surgery at Klina, I received two of your cushions, which proved indispensable for sleeping. It is wonderful that you thought of making these for patients. Now, four months after my surgery on both breasts, I still use them to sleep comfortably. It is very pleasant to be able to use these beautiful cushions for that purpose.*



Let's Make Pillows

