

## Chernobyl caused slight rise in cancer rates in northern Sweden: study

*No mention of causality though.*

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Radioactive fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in Ukraine led to an increase in cancer cases in northern Sweden, a study shows.

Researchers from the Linköping and Örebro university hospitals found "a slight exposure-related increase" in total cancer incidence after the Chernobyl disaster.

It is the first study to suggest a possible increase in post-Chernobyl cancer rates outside the Soviet Union as a result of the accident.

The findings appear in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, published by the British Medical Association (BMA).

The world's worst civilian nuclear disaster occurred on April 26, 1986, when reactor number four at the Chernobyl plant blew up, spewing out a radioactive cloud that swept across and contaminated much of northern Europe.

Previous Swedish studies have shown no increase, say the authors, led by Martin Tondel of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Linköping University.

Cancer rates were monitored among 1,143,182 people living in 450 parishes in seven out of Sweden's 21 counties during the two years after the accident.

People who lived in the region but whose area was not contaminated by radioactive fallout served as a control group.

During a follow-up carried out from 1988 to 1996, some 22,400 people in the contaminated areas were diagnosed with various types of cancer during the period.

This was 849 more than would otherwise have been expected, when compared to cancer incidence in this region in 1986-88.

Although this represents only a "slight" increase in the cancer rate, the authors say they were surprised to find a higher-than-expected rise among people who had received low doses of radiation.