Mortality data, abstracted from the World Health Organization (WHO) database, are available for various countries. We used breast cancer mortality data from Japan, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Italy and France for the period 1950–2008. For the USA and the UK, data were available for 1950–2005 and 1950–2007, respectively. For Italy, data were available for 1951–2003 and 2006–2007, and for France, data were available for 1950–2007.

Age-specific breast cancer mortality rates in adults over 40 years of age in the five countries between 1950 and 2008 are shown for females (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Trends in age-specific breast cancer mortality rates during 1950–2008 for females.

Note: Mortality data, abstracted from the WHO mortality database, were downloaded from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) CANCER Mondial Statistical Information System (http://www.dep.iarc.fr/). Data were tabulated by the authors of this article. Responsibility for this presentation and interpretation lies with the authors of this article.

The mortality rates in Japan were lower than those in the other four countries for all age groups, but increased sharply during the observation period among all age groups except those 40–49 years old. In Japan, there was no distinct difference between age groups 50–84 years seen in the other four countries. In the Western countries, the mortality rates in Italy were relatively low at the beginning of the observation period, but increased thereafter and became similar to those in the other three countries. Recent trends were that mortality rates were decreasing in all age groups in the USA and the UK, and in those below 70 years in Italy and France. In Japan, such a recent downward trend was observed only in those below 50 years old.

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