

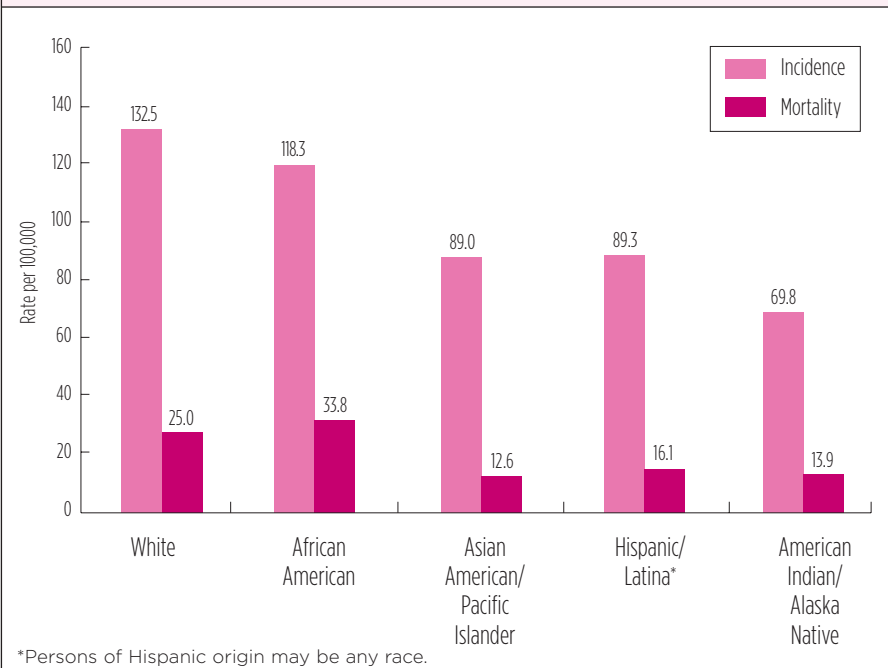
# Racial & Ethnic Differences

## Breast cancer racial and ethnic differences

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in the United States. It is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among nearly every racial and ethnic group, including African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latina women. Race is not considered a factor that might increase a woman's chance of getting breast cancer. However, the rates of developing and dying

from the disease differ among ethnic groups. Some of the reasons for these differences include possible differences in specific risk factors, differences in the biology of the breast cancer or differences in breast cancer screening rates and treatment. The differences in screening rates could be due to lack of awareness about mammography, cost of health insurance and lack of access to screening facilities.

**Rate of new cases and deaths from breast cancer by race and ethnicity, United States, 1998-2004**



American Cancer Society, Surveillance Research, 2007

## Screening can help save lives

The risk of dying increases greatly when breast cancer is diagnosed at more advanced stages. For this reason, it is important to ask your doctor which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk. Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk. Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.

## Incidence trends

The rate of new cases, or incidence of breast cancer, decreased in American Indian and Alaska Natives and did not change significantly among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders or Hispanics and Latinas, during 1992-2004. The incidence was stable in African Americans during the same time period. White women have a higher rate of developing breast cancer than any other racial or ethnic group.<sup>1</sup> However, among women under age 40, African Americans have a higher incidence of breast cancer than white women.<sup>1</sup> They are more likely to be diagnosed with larger tumors than white women. When Asian women migrate to the U.S., their risk of developing breast cancer increases up to six-fold.<sup>2</sup> Asian immigrant women living in the U.S. for as little as a decade had an 80 percent higher risk of breast cancer than new immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

## Resources

For more information on breast cancer among specific racial and ethnic groups, contact the following resources:

### Organizations

Susan G. Komen for the Cure®  
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)  
[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Cancer Society  
1-800-ACS-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Intercultural Cancer Council  
[www.iccnetwork.org](http://www.iccnetwork.org)

National Cancer Institute  
1-800-4-CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

## Survival rates

Survival rates for breast cancer patients are calculated by determining the percentage of people who are alive five years after the time of their diagnosis. African American women are less likely than white women to survive for five years after being diagnosed with breast cancer. The five year survival rate for African American women is 77 percent, compared to 90 percent for white women.<sup>1</sup> The five-year breast cancer survival rate for American Indian women is lower than that of any other ethnic and racial group in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> This variation might be explained by differences in breast cancer screening practices among the groups, stage at diagnosis, biology of the tumor and treatment. Studies looking at possible genetic links to increased mortality are ongoing. Mammograms and clinical breast exams help to detect breast cancer at earlier stages, when more treatment options are available and the chance for survival greatly increase.

## Death rates

Even though white women have a higher rate of developing breast cancer, African American women are more likely to die from breast cancer (see graphs on front side). Studies have found that African American women often have aggressive tumors associated with poorer prognosis. Some ethnic and racial groups have been less likely to receive breast cancer screening, and thus their breast cancers are often diagnosed at later stages. This later diagnosis increases the chance of dying from breast cancer.

1 American Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008.

2 Ziegler R.G., et al, Journal of National Cancer Institute, 1993.

3 National Institutes of Health, 1994.

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Risk Factors
- Breast Cancer Detection
- Breast Health Resources