

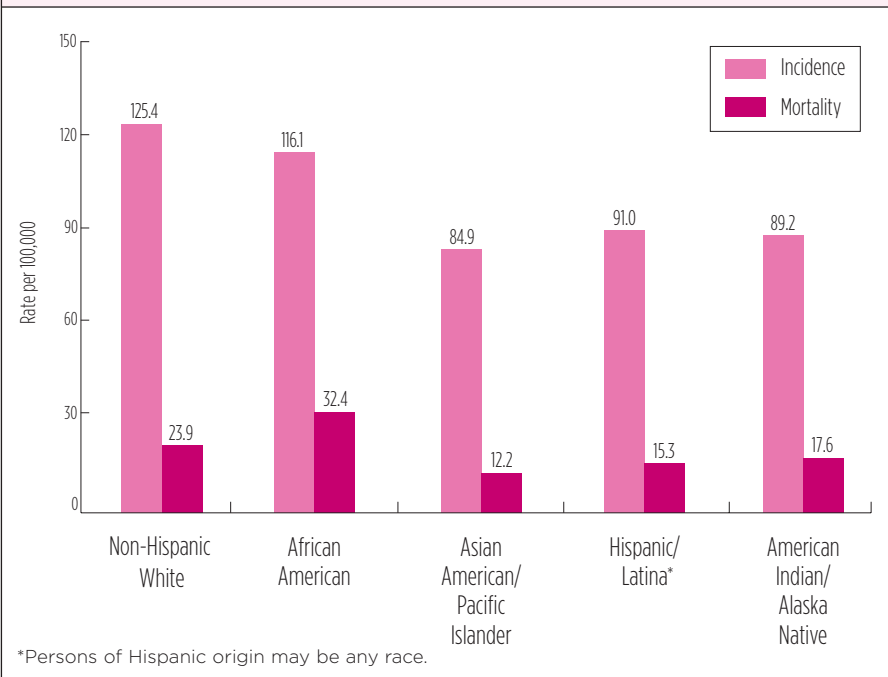
# Racial & Ethnic Differences

## Breast cancer differences

Aside from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer 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. This may be due to differences in specific risk factors, the biology of the breast cancer or in breast cancer screening rates and treatment. The differences in screening rates could be due to the cost of health insurance and/or lack of awareness about screening tests and access to screening facilities.

**Rate of incidence (2004-2008) and deaths (2003-2007) from breast cancer by race and ethnicity, United States**



American Cancer Society, Surveillance Research, 2011

## Screening help may save lives

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.

The risk of dying increases when breast cancer is diagnosed at more advanced stages.

## Incidence trends

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 45, African Americans have a higher incidence of breast cancer than white women.<sup>2</sup> They are also more likely to be diagnosed with larger tumors than white women. Hispanic/Latina women have a lower incidence of breast cancer than white women.<sup>1</sup> They are more likely to be diagnosed with larger tumors and late stage breast cancer than white women.<sup>3</sup>

When Asian women migrate to the U.S., their risk of developing breast cancer increases up to six-fold.<sup>4</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>4</sup>

During 1999-2008, breast cancer incidence rates among Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latina and American Indian/Alaska Native women remained mostly unchanged.<sup>1</sup>

## Death rates

Even though white women get breast cancer at higher rates, African American women are more likely to die from breast cancer (see graph on front side). Studies have found that African American women often have aggressive tumors associated with poorer prognosis (expected outcome). Hispanic/Latina women are also more likely to die from breast cancer than white women who are diagnosed at a similar age and stage.<sup>3</sup> 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.

## Survival rates

Five year relative survival rates are determined by the percentage of people who are alive five years after the time of their diagnosis compared to those without the disease. All racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. are more likely than African American women to survive

for five years after being diagnosed with breast cancer. The five-year survival rates for:

- White women is 90 percent<sup>1</sup>
- African American women is 77 percent, lower than that of any other ethnic and racial group in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- Hispanic/Latina women is 84 percent<sup>1</sup>
- Asian women is 91 percent<sup>1</sup>
- Pacific Islander women is 85 percent<sup>1</sup>
- American Indian/Alaska Native women is 86 percent<sup>1</sup>

This 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 there are more treatment options and a better chance of survival.

1 American Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2011-2012.

2 American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures for African Americans 2011-2012

3 American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures for Hispanics/Latinos 2009-2011.

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

## Resources

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)

### Related fact sheets in this series:

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