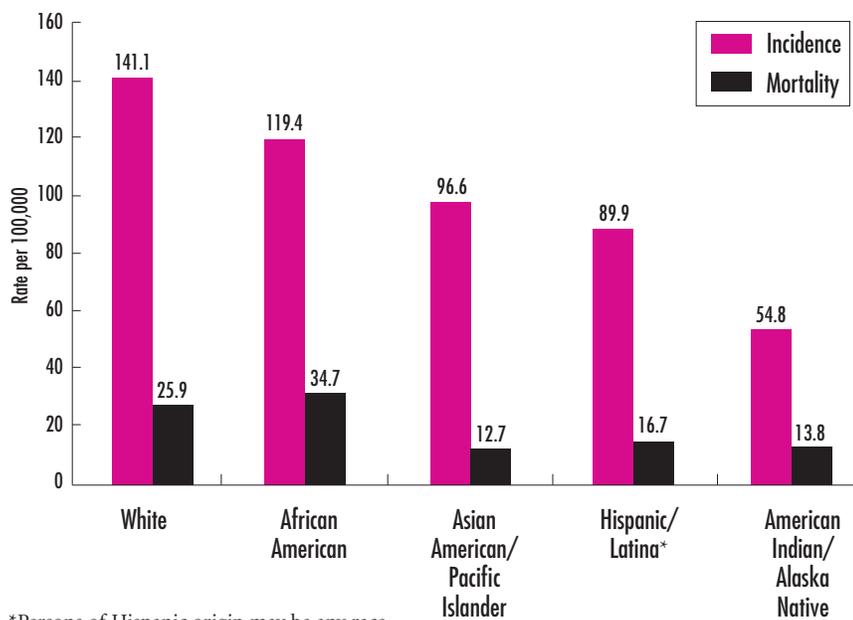


Breast cancer racial and ethnic differences 

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. The latter 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, 1998-2002



\*Persons of Hispanic origin may be any race.

American Cancer Society, Surveillance Research, 2005

Screening can help save lives

Access to health care and participation in screening such as mammography and clinical breast exams may explain at least some of the racial and ethnic differences in the rates of death from breast cancer. The risk of dying increases greatly when breast cancer is diagnosed at more advanced stages of disease. For this reason, it is important to get routine mammograms (yearly for women age 40 and older), get clinical breast exams (at least every 3 years until age 40, then yearly), and perform monthly breast self-exams (BSE).



## Incidence trends

The rate of new cases, or incidence of breast cancer, increased overall in Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, during 1992-2002. The incidence decreased overall in American Indian and Alaska Natives and 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 35, African Americans have a higher incidence of breast cancer than white women.<sup>2</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>3</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>3</sup>

## Resources

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

### Organizations

#### **The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.**

1-800 I'M AWARE

[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

#### **National Cancer Institute**

1.800.4 CANCER

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

#### **American Cancer Society**

1.800.ACS.2345

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

<sup>1</sup>American Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2005-2006.

<sup>2</sup>Shavers, V.L., et al, *Cancer*, 2003.

<sup>3</sup>Ziegler R.G., et al, *Journal of National Cancer Institute*, 1993.

<sup>4</sup>National Institutes of Health, 1994.

## Survival rates

Survival rates for breast cancer patients are calculated by determining the percentage of patients 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 76 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>4</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, clinical breast exams and breast self-exams help to detect breast cancer at earlier stages, when chances 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). 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.

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- breast cancer risk factors
- breast cancer detection
- breast health resources

*The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast health and breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. The Komen Foundation does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.*