

Cancer Health Disparities Among American Indian and Alaska Native Populations



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data reveals cancer health disparities among Native people through surveillance and research.

AI/AN populations in the United States have unique cancer patterns due to their history and culture, where they live, how they get health care, and institutionalized racism. Many Native people live on reservation lands or in remote rural areas, where their primary health care is provided by a tribally operated health program or the Indian Health Service. Rural and urban Native people often experience more poverty, lower levels of education, and poorer housing conditions compared with the general US population. View the resources below to learn more about cancer in AI/AN communities.

Linking Cancer Data with the Indian Health Service

To improve the quality of cancer statistics for Native people, CDC routinely links cancer registry data and death certificate data with Indian Health Service registration data to identify Native people correctly. Many times, they are incorrectly reported as being members of other racial groups.

Two databases are produced:

- [U.S. Cancer Statistics American Indian and Alaska Native Incidence Analytic Database](#)
- [U.S. Cancer Statistics AI/AN Mortality Database](#) (Database not accessible to the general public. More details on methodology at: "[Methods for Improving the Quality and Completeness of Mortality Data for American Indians and Alaska Natives](#)," *American Journal of Public Health*, June 2014)

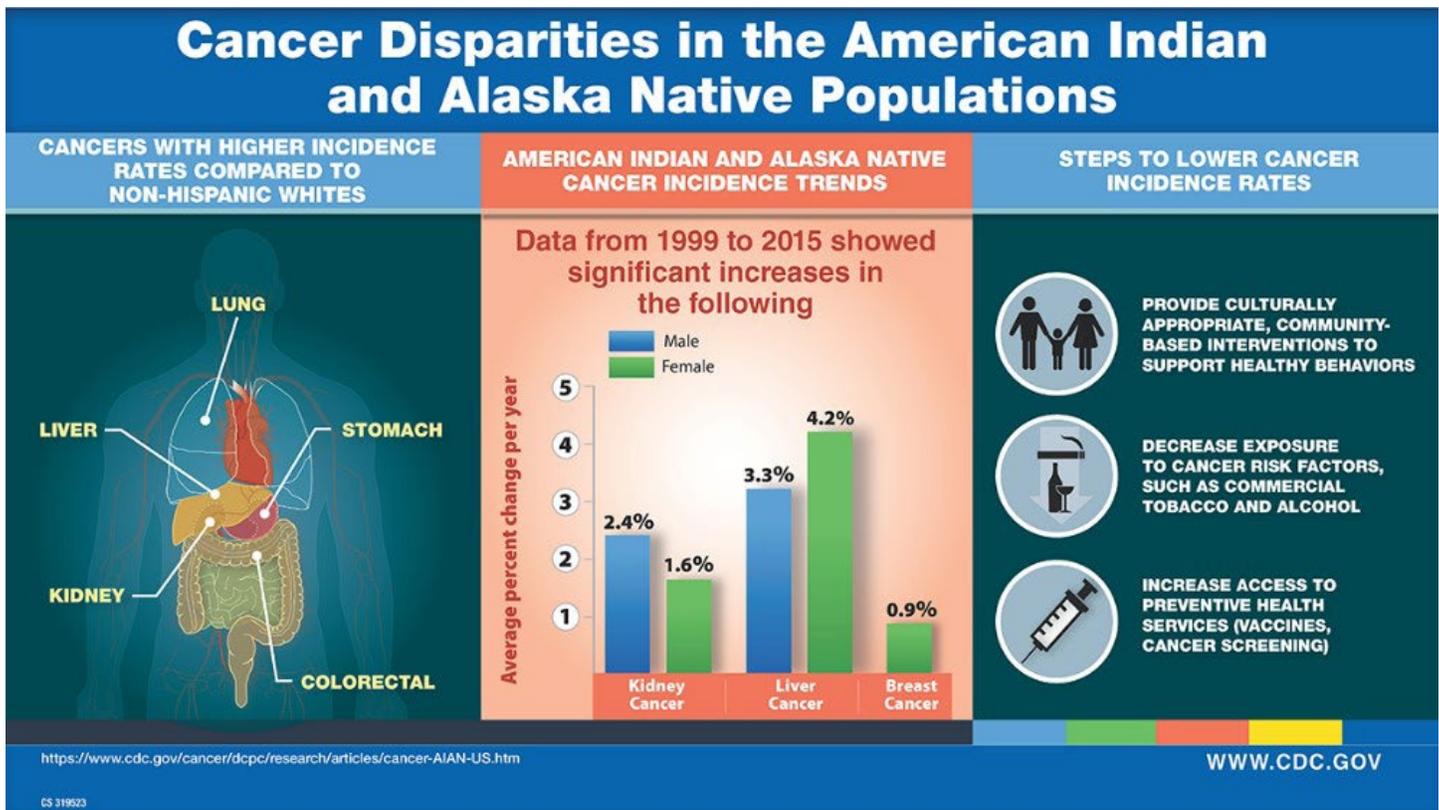
You can explore the incidence data on the [Rate of New Cancers in American Indian/Alaska Native module](#) of the US Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations tool.

More Information

- The [Cancer Research Citation Search tool](#) provides links to scientific articles authored or coauthored by scientists in [CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control](#).
- Several [US Cancer Statistics Data Briefs](#) highlight cancer incidence in American Indian and Alaska Native populations.



Cancer Health Disparities Among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Populations



American Indians and Alaska Natives have higher rates of getting colorectal, kidney, liver, lung, and stomach cancers than non-Hispanic Whites. Between 1999 and 2015, incidence rates of liver, kidney, and female breast cancers increased significantly among Native people.¹

Assessing Disparities

CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control uses these databases to quantify cancer disparities among Native populations. This information can be used to develop targeted intervention strategies.

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CDC scientists are researching trends in leading cancers with higher incidence rates among Native people, including colorectal, stomach, and lung cancers, as well as the disparities in treatment for breast cancer. CDC scientists have studied cancer among the Navajo² and among the Haudenosaunee Nations.³

References

- ¹Melkonian SC, Jim MA, Haverkamp D, et al. Disparities in cancer incidence and trends among American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States, 2010–2015. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomark.* 2019;28(10):1604–1611.
- ²Navajo Cancer Workgroup. *Cancer Among the Navajo, 2005–2013.* [PDF-8.8MB] Window Rock, AZ: Navajo Department of Health; 2018.
- ³Haring RC, Jim MA, Erwin D, Kaur J, Henry WAE, Haring ML, Seneca DS. Mortality disparities: a comparison with the Haudenosaunee in New York State. *Cancer Health Disparities.* 2018;2.

