

HISPANICS/LATINOS & CANCER

WHO WE ARE

The Hispanic/Latino population is more accurately referred to as a mosaic of cultures. In reality, the various Hispanic subgroups reflect profound differences in ethnicities, cultures, and origins, and have remarkably few characteristics in common. For example, this population covers the racial spectrum; Hispanics can be White, African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Native American. Moreover, the diversity extends to nationality, customs, heritage, lifestyles, and socioeconomic status. While similarities among the groups do exist, particularly in language (Spanish) and religion (Catholic), deeply embedded dissimilarities of the different groups in background and life experiences will influence health. This means caution should be taken in making broad generalizations about the Hispanic/Latino population. By the year 2000 Hispanics/Latinos numbered about 32.5 million and comprised 11.8% of the population.⁽¹⁾ By 2050, Hispanics/Latinos will represent almost a quarter of the country's population (98.2 million).⁽¹⁾ Nearly two-thirds of all Hispanics/Latinos were of Mexican origin (62.5%) and 9.6% were of Puerto Rican origin, while people of Cuban origin, Central and South American origin, and Other Hispanics/Latinos each accounted for 4.3%, 14.3% and 6.6%, respectively.^(1, 2, 3)

STATISTICAL CANCER FACTS FOR HISPANIC/LATINO AMERICANS

- ◆ Among Mexican American and Puerto Rican women, cervical cancer incidence is two to three times higher than in non-Hispanic White women.⁽²⁾
- ◆ The frequency of prostate cancer is significantly lower only in Mexican Americans. Incidence rates for Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans are comparable to those of non-Hispanic White men.⁽²⁾
- ◆ Education levels, which are associated with economic levels and health status, are also lower among Hispanics than other populations. For example, Hispanics are less likely to have a high school diploma than non-Hispanic Whites. In 1999, approximately 56.1% of Hispanics age 25 and older had finished high school or more, compared to about 87.7% of non-Hispanic White adults.^(2, 3)
- ◆ In 1998, the median income for Hispanic households was \$28,330, considerably lower than the \$42,439 median income for their non-Hispanic White counterparts. In the same year, poverty rates among Hispanics were over three times higher (25.6% vs. 8.2%) compared with non-Hispanic Whites.^(2, 3)
- ◆ The leading cancer sites for Hispanic men and women are the same as those for Whites: prostate, breast, lung, and colon and rectum.^(2, 4)
- ◆ The median age of Hispanic Americans in 1999 was 26.1 years as compared to 36.1 for the general US population. However, there are wide variations in age among



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Hispanic population groups. The median ages of Mexican Americans (24.2) and Puerto Ricans were the lowest (27.5), while that of Cuban Americans was much higher (41.3). Not surprisingly, the proportion of the Cuban American population over age 65 (17.8%) was considerably higher than the percentage found in Mexican Americans (4.4%) and Puerto Ricans (6.5%).⁽³⁾

- ◆ Hispanics are more likely to be unemployed than non-Hispanic Whites. The unemployment rate for Hispanics in 1999 was 6.7%, compared with 3.6% for non-Hispanic Whites.⁽³⁾
 - ◆ Latino children are more likely to be living in poverty than non-Hispanic White children. Hispanic children represented 15.7% of all children in the United States but constituted over one-fourth (28.5%) of all children in poverty. Based on 1998 data, 34.4% of Hispanic children under 18 years of age were living in poverty, compared with only 10.6% of non-Hispanic White children.⁽³⁾
 - ◆ Among Latino groups, the poverty rate ranged from 26.7% among Puerto Rican families to 11.0% among Cuban families. Still the poverty rate of Cuban families was about twice as high as that of non-Hispanic White families.⁽³⁾
 - ◆ Only 38% of Hispanic women age 40 and older have regular screening mammograms, a simple procedure that can detect breast cancer at its earliest stage, before clinical symptoms develop.⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾
 - ◆ Hispanics experienced the highest invasive cervical cancer incidence rates (16.2 per 100,000) of any group other than Vietnamese, and twice the incidence rates of non-Hispanic White women (7.9 per 100,000).^(4, 7-9)
 - ◆ Even though Hispanic women have lower rates of breast cancer (69.8 per 100,000) compared to non-Hispanic White women or Black women (111.8 and 95.4 respectively), breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanics.^(5, 7)
 - ◆ Factors related to higher mortality among Latinas are most certainly due to the underutilization of Pap smear screening in this population. As an illustration, a large multiethnic Hispanic population study conducted by Ramirez et al.⁽⁸⁾ shows significant variations in Pap smear screening across Hispanic groups in the United States (from 53% among Mexican American women age 40 and older in Laredo, Texas to almost 80% among younger Mexican American women in San Diego, California). Comparing this study's results to the Healthy People 2010 target of 85% to all women, only Central American women in San Francisco, Mexican American women in California, and Cuban women in Miami, Florida, are approaching these goals.^(8, 10)
 - ◆ Poverty, lack of insurance, low education, limited access to health care, lack of awareness of breast cancer risks and screening methods, physician referrals, acculturation levels and barriers related to language, culture, and negative provider attitudes, play an important role in the lower rates of screening services utilization by Hispanic women.^(8, 11-14)
 - ◆ Age, income, education, health insurance coverage, language proficiency, physician referrals, system barriers, are some of the factors that influence the participation of Hispanic women in the utilization of screening services. Other factors include cultural beliefs about modesty and sexual behavior, fatalism, acculturation factors unrelated to language use, family-centered values, and existing social support networks. The degree to which each Hispanic population group in each locale holds onto beliefs about cancer may play an important role in levels of participation.^(8, 11-14)
 - ◆ Low screening participation rates make Hispanic women more likely to be diagnosed at a more advanced stage of the disease when fewer treatment options are available, resulting in poorer outcomes and higher mortality.^(8, 11, 15)
 - ◆ Cervical cancer risk is high among Latinas, with incidence rates that are double those of Whites. This risk differential has not appreciably improved over the last decades. Cervical cancer mortality is also markedly higher among Latinas.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ While rates of stomach cancer have decreased dramatically over the decades among all race and ethnic groups, Latinos still have higher risks than Whites.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ Although stomach cancer has long been known to be related to socioeconomic status, little is known about the exact causes of the high risk among Latinos. Among males, stomach cancer rates are 30 percent to 90 percent higher than Whites in the same geographic area. Incidence rates are 50 percent to twofold higher among Latina than among non-Latina populations.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ For both males and females, incidence of primary liver cancer is about twice as high as for non-Latinos in the same area. Rates of primary liver cancer appear to be particularly high among Mexican Americans in Texas, even when compared to Latinos in California or other regions.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ Incidence rates for gallbladder cancer are excessive in Latino populations compared to non-Latinos. Although relatively rare, rates are about 1 per 100,000 in Latino males and about 3-4 per 100,000 in Latinas.⁽¹⁰⁾
 - ◆ Although rare in the United States, primary liver cancer is more frequent in Latino populations than other groups. Rates of liver cancer in the Hispanic population are roughly twice as high as the rates in Whites. Incidence rates among Hispanic men and women are 6.7 and 2.6 per 100,000 compared to 3.3 and 1.3 per 100,000 among their White counterparts.^(10, 16)
 - ◆ Hispanic women have lower breast cancer screening rates than non-Hispanic White women and tend to seek and attain health care services less than other ethnic groups.^(11, 12, 17)
 - ◆ The five-year survival rate for non-Hispanic White women with breast cancer is 85% while for Hispanic women it is 76%.⁽¹⁵⁾
 - ◆ Hispanics have higher incidence and mortality rates of stomach cancer compared to non-Hispanic Whites. The incidence rates for White Hispanic men and women for example are 16.2 and 8.4 per 100,000 compared to 9.6 and 3.9 for White non-Hispanic men and women. Mortality rates are 8.8 and 4.4 for White Hispanic men and women compared to 6.0 and 2.7 for White non-Hispanic men and women.⁽¹⁶⁾
 - ◆ The five most frequently diagnosed cancers among Hispanic men are prostate, lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, urinary bladder and stomach.⁽¹⁶⁾
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- ◆ The five most frequently diagnosed cancers among Hispanic women are breast, colon and rectum, lung and bronchus, cervix uteri, and corpus uteri. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- ◆ The five most common types of cancer deaths among Hispanic men are lung and bronchus, prostate, colon and rectum, stomach, and pancreas. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- ◆ The five most common types of cancer deaths among Hispanic women are breast, lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, pancreas, and ovary. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- ◆ While Latinos represent about 12% of the population, they make up 25% of the Nation's uninsured. They are almost three times less likely to have a consistent source of medical care, so they rely more heavily on emergency room treatment. In fact, Latinos are 1.5 times more likely to use the hospital ER as a primary source of care compared with the general population. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ◆ Sixty percent of Latinos have insurance through their jobs - compared to 85% of non-Hispanics. Among children, 30% of Latinos are uninsured - compared to nearly 20% of Black children and 13% of Whites. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ◆ Uninsured Hispanics are two to three times more likely to have cancer diagnosed at a later stage, making it less treatable. Uninsured Hispanic women with breast cancer are 2.3 times more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage while uninsured Hispanic men with prostate cancer are 3.75 times more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ◆ Health risk experienced by the uninsured Latino population include a reduced access to care and poorer medical outcomes. The uninsured are less likely to have a regular source of medical care, less likely to have had a recent physician visit, more likely to delay seeking medical care, more likely to report they have not received needed care, and less likely to use preventive services. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- ◆ Smoking is responsible for 87% of the lung cancer deaths in the United States. Overall, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Hispanics. ^(19, 20)
- ◆ Lung cancer deaths are about three times higher for Hispanic men (23.1 per 100,000) than for Hispanic women (7.7 per 100,000). The rate of lung cancer deaths per 100,000 were higher among Cuban American men (33.7) than among Puerto Rican (28.3) and Mexican American (21.9) men. ^(19, 20)
- ◆ Tobacco products are advertised and promoted disproportionately to racial/ethnic minority communities. Examples of target promotions include the introduction of a cigarette product with the brand name "Rio" and an earlier cigarette product named "Dorado," which was advertised and marketed to the Hispanic American community. ^(19, 20)
- ◆ To increase its credibility in the Hispanic community, the tobacco industry has contributed to programs that aim to enhance the primary and secondary education of children, has funded universities and colleges, and has supported scholarship programs targeting Hispanics. Tobacco companies have also placed advertising in many Hispanic publications. The industry also contributes to cultural Hispanic events and provides significant support to the Hispanic art community. ^(19, 20)
- ◆ The 1997 National Health Interview Survey data show that overall current smoking prevalence among Hispanic adults was 20.4%, compared with 16.9% for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 25.3% for Whites, 26.7% for African Americans, and 34.1% for American Indians and Alaska Natives. ^(19, 21)
- ◆ In 1997, 26.2% of Hispanic men smoked compared with 27.4% of White men. The smoking rate among Hispanic women was 14.3 %, compared with 23.3% among White women. ^(19, 21)
- ◆ The Monitoring the Future Study shows that cigarette smoking among Hispanic high school seniors declined from 35.7% in 1977 to 20.6% in 1989; however, smoking prevalence has been increasing in the 1990s - from 21.7% in 1990 to 27.3% in 1999. ^(19, 22)
- ◆ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) found that about one-third of Hispanic high school students in grades 9 through 12 were current cigarette smokers. Smoking prevalence increased by one-third among Hispanic students from 1991 (25.3%) to 1997 (34.0%). Recent YRBSS data shows that current smoking trends among Hispanic students remain high, but appeared to have plateaued with no statistically significant difference between 1997 and 1999 — 34.0% and 32.7%, respectively. ^(19, 23)
- ◆ In general, smoking rates among Mexican American adults increase as they learn and adopt the values, beliefs, and norms of American culture. ⁽²⁴⁾
- ◆ Factors that are associated with smoking among Hispanics include drinking alcohol, working and living with other smokers, having poor health, and being depressed. ⁽²⁴⁾
- ◆ Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in Hispanic men and the second most common cancer in Hispanic women in the United States. Hispanic men have a colorectal cancer incidence rate of 35.5 per 100,000 and Hispanic women have an incidence rate of 24.3 per 100,000. ^(25, 26)
- ◆ According to the 1992 National Health Interview Survey Results, Hispanics are less likely than non-Hispanics to report having had a screening test for colorectal cancer. Low screening rates among Hispanics indicate a great need for providing education to Hispanics about the importance of early screening for, and detection of, colorectal cancer and an equally great need for increasing Hispanic's access to these critical health services. ⁽²⁶⁾
- ◆ Primary liver cancer has several known risk factors – these are Hepatitis B and C viruses, exposure to aflatoxins, cirrhosis, and alcohol use. ⁽²⁷⁾ Which of these risk factors explains the excessive risks observed in Latinos is as yet unknown. Another risk factor suggested but not directly proven is exposure to chemicals or organic solvents via agricultural occupations. ^(10, 27)

Additional facts and information on Hispanic/Latino populations can be found at <http://iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts>

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