

Cancer Incidence Among Asians in the Greater Bay Area 1990-2002

This special report “Cancer Incidence Among Asians in the Greater Bay Area, 1990-2002” presents information for six non-Hispanic Asian ethnic subgroups: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese. Intercensal population estimates for Asian ethnic subgroups are typically not available from the U.S. Census or the California Department of Finance, which provide population estimate data used to compute cancer incidence and mortality rates in state and regional reports. We have used demographic methods to estimate the inter- (1991-1999) and post- (2001+) censal population of Asian subgroups from 1990-2002 (Appendix 1), and here present cancer incidence rates based on these estimates for 14 of the most common cancer sites and for all cancer sites combined for these six Asian subgroups. Because the annual number of cancer cases in each subgroup can be small, thus affecting the statistical stability of the estimates, we grouped the 13 years from 1990-2002 into three periods: 1990-1993, 1994-1997, and 1998-2002. Technical notes regarding the collection and definition of cancer incidence data, and computation of rates are available from the report “Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Greater Bay Area, 1988-2002”.

Executive Summary

The six Greater Bay Area Asian subgroup populations experienced substantial growth over the 13-year period from 1990 to 2002 (Appendix 2). In 1990, the largest Asian subgroups were Chinese, Filipinos, and Vietnamese, followed very closely by Japanese. Over this time period, the South Asian population increased three-fold in size and, in 2002, represented the third largest Asian subgroup after Chinese and Filipinos. The Japanese population experienced the smallest rate of growth (33%) among these subgroups. The Filipino and Korean populations increased over 50% over this time, Chinese 64%, and Vietnamese 85%.

Nearly 18,000 new cases of invasive cancer were diagnosed among Asians living in the Greater Bay Area in the most recent five-year period 1998 through 2002. The five most common cancer sites varied across the ethnic subgroups. In the years 1998 through 2002, prostate, lung, or colorectal cancer ranked as the top two most commonly occurring cancers among males, comprising 40-50% of all new cancers. Among females, breast cancer was the most commonly occurring cancer across all ethnic subgroups, accounting for 25-35% of all new cancers. The second and third most common cancers among females were either colorectal or lung cancer.

Highlights from the data include:

- **All cancer sites combined:** Rates declined for all Asian ethnic subgroups over the 13-year period in both males and females, but in some subgroups, the decline was evident only between the last two time periods. Among males, cancer incidence rates were highest among Vietnamese, followed closely by Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese, and lowest among South Asians. Among females, overall rates were highest among Japanese, followed by Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipinas, and were lowest among Koreans.

- **Breast cancer:** Trends in invasive breast cancer rates varied among the ethnic subgroups; breast cancer rates among Chinese, Koreans, South Asians, and Vietnamese remained the same or continued to rise, while rates among Japanese and Filipinas peaked in the period 1994-1997 and declined thereafter. Rates of this cancer varied across the ethnic subgroups, with a two-fold difference between the highest group (Japanese) and the lowest group (Korean). The patterns for invasive cancer contrast somewhat with those for *in situ* breast cancer, for which rates were highest and increased steadily over time among Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinas.
- **Cervical cancer:** Rates generally declined over time, particularly among Vietnamese women, but remained highest among Vietnamese.
- **Colorectal cancer:** Rates declined over time in all groups except Korean and Vietnamese males and South Asian females. Rates of this cancer varied three-fold across the subgroups, being highest in Chinese and Japanese, and lowest in South Asians.
- **Corpus uteri cancer:** Rates were highest among Japanese and Filipinos, and changed very little over time among Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinas. However, the rates were somewhat variable among Koreans, South Asians, and Vietnamese, due to small numbers.
- **Leukemia:** Rates in males were nearly two-times rates in females, but were similar across Asian subgroups, and have remained fairly stable over the time period.
- **Liver cancer:** Rates were highest among Vietnamese; among males, Vietnamese had 10-fold higher rates than South Asians, the group with the lowest incidence. There has been little change in liver cancer incidence rates over time among the subgroups with the striking exception of Vietnamese women, in whom rates doubled over this time period.
- **Lung cancer:** Rates in males were two- to three-fold higher than rates in females, due in part to higher prevalence of cigarette smoking among Asian males than females. Among males, rates were highest among Chinese, Filipinos, and Vietnamese, while among females, rates were highest among Chinese and Vietnamese. Rates have declined over time or remained essentially unchanged in all groups.
- **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma:** Rates in males were two-times higher than rates in females, but with similar incidence across all groups except Koreans, in whom rates were slightly lower. In general, rates have declined over time, except in Chinese females, for whom there has been no change, and in Vietnamese females, for whom rates have doubled.
- **Oral cavity and pharyngeal cancer:** There were large variations in rates across groups, with the highest rates among Vietnamese and Chinese, and lowest among Koreans and South Asians. Over time, rates were relatively stable for most groups, but there was a substantial decline in the rate for Filipino females and a suggestive decline in Japanese females.

- **Ovarian cancer:** Rates declined slightly over time in all groups except Koreans, in whom it remained essentially the same over time. In the latest time period, rates were very similar across subgroups.
- **Prostate cancer:** There was a three-fold difference in rates across the Asian subgroups, with the highest rates among Filipinos, and lowest among Koreans. Rates have decreased over time in all groups except for Chinese and Vietnamese men.
- **Stomach cancer:** Rates were highest among Koreans, followed by Japanese and Vietnamese, and were lowest among South Asians, who experienced a dramatic decline from the earliest time period.
- **Thyroid cancer:** Rates in females were about three-times higher than rates in males, and were highest in Filipinos and Vietnamese.