

Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Greater Bay Area, 1988-2005

Executive Summary

- The overall incidence rate of new cancers in the Greater Bay Area declined by 16% for males* and 10% for females from 1988-2005. Black males* continued to have the highest overall rates of cancer, while Asian/Pacific Islander women continued to experience the lowest overall rates.
- 474,406 new cases of invasive cancer were diagnosed during the 18-year period 1988 through 2005 in the Greater Bay Area*. The five most common cancers (breast, prostate, lung, colorectal, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma) accounted for 59% of these cases.
- In females, breast cancer was the most common cancer. Between 1988 and 2005, there were 75,235 new cases of breast cancer, comprising 33% of all new cancers in females. Prostate cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer in males*, with 70,306 new diagnoses comprising 29% of all new cancers in males during the same time period. Together, these two sites represented 31% of all cancers diagnosed over the 18-year period.
- From 1988 to 2005, cancer mortality rates in the Greater Bay Area declined by 27% for males* and 21% for females. 183,234 deaths due to cancer occurred during this period, with the five most common causes of cancer death (lung, colorectal, breast, prostate, and pancreatic) accounting for 55% of these deaths.
- For both males and females, lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death, representing about 25% of all cancer deaths in the Greater Bay Area. In females, there were 21,034 deaths due to lung cancer, accounting for 23% of all cancer deaths among females. The 25,293 lung cancer deaths in males comprised 27% of all cancer deaths in males.
- In 2005, non-Hispanic black males* and females continued to have the highest rate of lung cancer incidence of all four racial/ethnic groups. A steady decrease in lung cancer incidence rates from 1988 to 2005 have occurred in all racial/ethnic groups except Asian/Pacific Islander women.
- In 2003, incidence rates for invasive breast cancer declined sharply in most racial/ethnic groups and these declines generally persisted through the years 2004 and 2005. Detailed assessments of these declines have shown that they were generally limited to estrogen receptor-positive tumors occurring in women aged 50 years and over. Research is ongoing to understand if the breast cancer declines are temporary and how they relate to changes in use of hormone replacement therapy and mammography.

*Veterans Health Administration (VHA) hospitals did not report cancer cases to California Cancer Registries for the year 2005. Therefore, case counts and incidence rates for adult males in 2005 are underestimated and should be interpreted with caution. For more information, see page 11 of this report.

- Breast cancer mortality rates have continued to decline in all racial/ethnic groups and remain highest in non-Hispanic black women.
- Among Hispanics, female breast and male colorectal* cancer incidence rates are higher in Marin County for the years 2001 to 2005 compared to other counties in the Greater Bay Area. These incidence patterns are consistent with Census data showing that Hispanics in Marin County are more likely to be US-born, acculturated, and from South versus Central America, compared to Hispanics in other parts of the Greater Bay Area. Acculturation to the Western lifestyle has been shown to be associated with higher incidence of breast and colorectal cancers.
- Prostate cancer incidence* and mortality rates continued to decrease in 2005. While the rates still remain highest in non-Hispanic black men, this group is continuing to see a dramatic decrease in incidence and mortality compared to whites and Hispanics.
- Liver cancer incidence* rates are consistently higher among Asians/Pacific Islanders, particularly among males. Among other racial/ethnic groups, liver cancer incidence has been increasing over time. Rates of liver cancer are highest in San Francisco County than other counties.
- Colorectal cancer incidence* and mortality rates for all racial/ethnic groups combined continued to decrease in 2005. Rates remain highest among Black males and females.
- In 2005, among Black males*, incidence and mortality rates for pancreatic cancer are lower than in prior years. For all other racial/ethnic groups, rates have remained relatively stable.
- Incidence rates for invasive and *in situ* melanoma were higher in the year 2005 than in prior years due to targeted efforts initiated to improve physician and hospital reporting of melanomas in the Greater Bay Area. Melanoma rates are substantially higher in non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics than other groups, with males having higher incidence than females.
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma is more common among males than females. In 2005, San Francisco County continued to have the highest incidence rate among males compared to other counties, most likely due to the higher prevalence of HIV infection.

*Veterans Health Administration (VHA) hospitals did not report cancer cases to California Cancer Registries for the year 2005. Therefore, case counts and incidence rates for adult males in 2005 are underestimated and should be interpreted with caution. For more information, see page 11 of this report.