



Surveillance Update: Cervical and Breast Cancer Screening Visits Among Alaskan Women



Section of Women's Children's and Family Health, MCH Epidemiology Unit
Published February 2025, Contact: mch-epi@alaska.gov

Women's preventive health care visits are important for monitoring infectious and chronic diseases, as well as informing approaches to treatment. In 2022, **75%** of Alaskan adult women reported having a routine health care visit in the past year.¹ A key component of routine health care visits for women is screening for cervical and breast cancers. This data sheet describes patterns in cancer screening visits, as well as their incidence and mortality statistics, for cervical and breast cancer in Alaska. All estimates are age-adjusted.

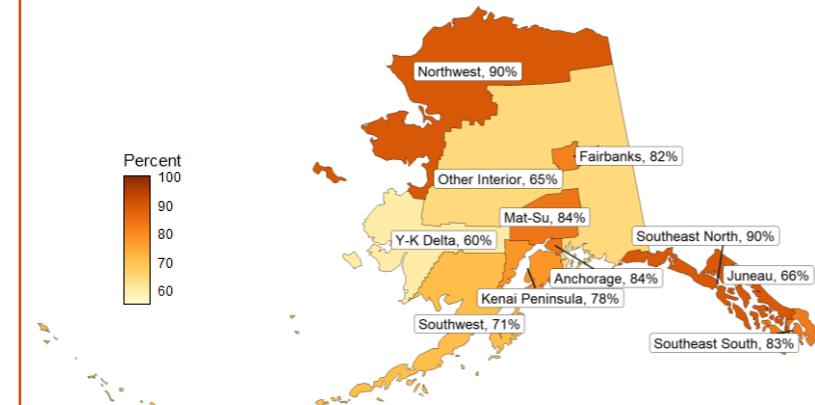
Cervical cancer screening recommendations vary based on factors such as age, prior history of cervical cancer, and infection with human papillomaviruses (HPV). Screening consists of a Pap smear test, an HPV test, or both, depending on these factors.²

HPV vaccination can prevent up to **90%** of cancers caused by HPV.³ In 2022 **62%** of Alaskan females and **61%** of males aged 13-17 years old were fully vaccinated for HPV, compared to **65%** and **61%** nationwide, respectively.⁴

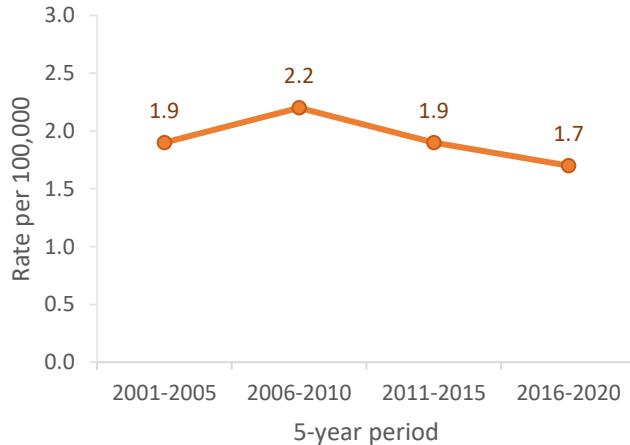
In Alaska, the **incidence of cervical cancer** during 2015-2019 was **7.8 cases per 100,000 women**, higher than the nationwide rate (6.9 per 100,000) in the same period.^{5,6}

During 2015-2019, **37% of incident cases were late stage**, in Alaska.⁵

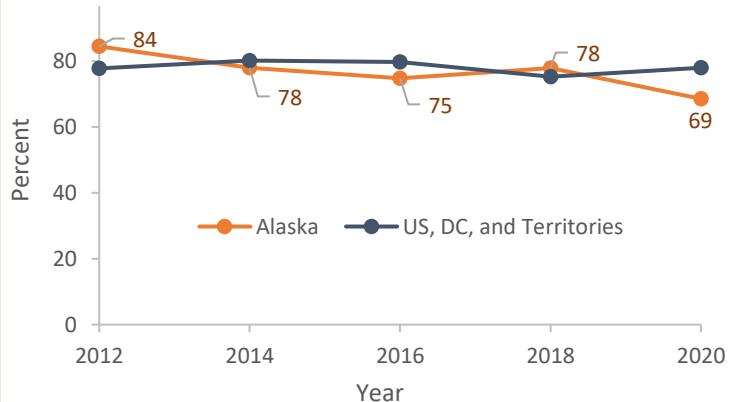
Statewide, **80% of Alaskan women met screening guidelines for cervical cancer**, with differences observed by region (BRFSS 2018 and 2020)



Cervical cancer mortality rates over time in Alaska (ACR, 2001-2020)



Reported **Pap smear testing (in past 3 years)** has **decreased** among women aged 21-65 in Alaska, while rates remained flat in the US, DC, and Territories (BRFSS 2012-2020)



Breast cancer screening with mammography is recommended every 1 to 2 years starting at age 40 years and continued until at least age 75.⁷

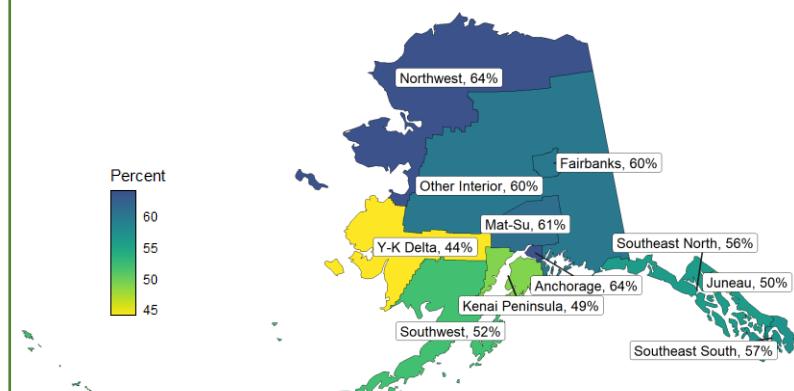
Among Alaskan **women aged 40+**, **59% reported being screened** for breast cancer in the past 2 years during 2016-2022.¹

In Alaska, the **incidence of female breast cancer** was **126 cases per 100,000** women during 2015-2019, similar to the nationwide rate (130 per 100,000).^{5,6}

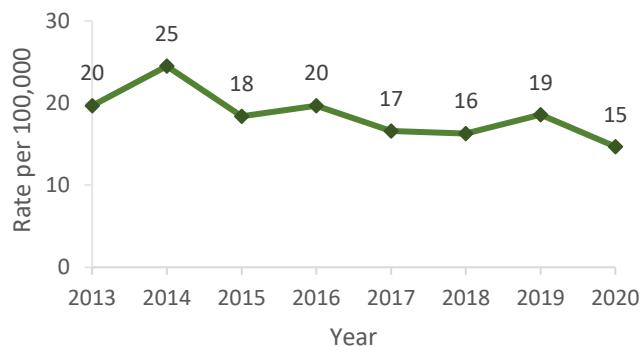
Among Alaskan women aged 50-74, **26% of incident cases** were **late stage** during 2015-2019.⁵

Alaskan women **without insurance** were less likely to report having a mammogram in the past 2 years compared to those **with insurance**, (**30% vs 63%**, respectively) (BRFSS, 2016-2022).

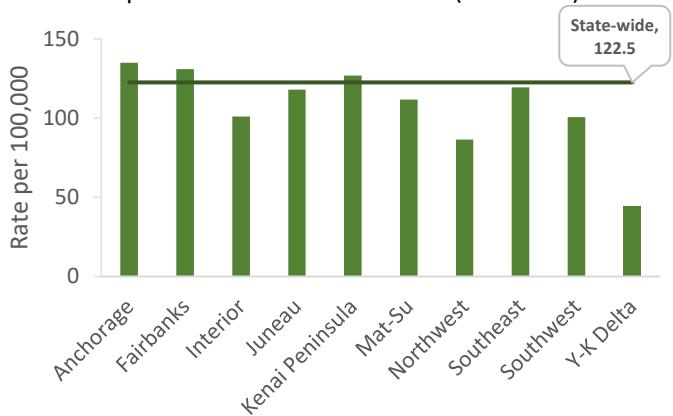
Percent of women aged 40+ reporting a **mammogram** in **past 2 years** by **region** (BRFSS 2016-2022)



Breast cancer mortality rates among Alaskan women have been **decreasing** over time (ACR, 2013-2020)



Incidence of breast cancer diagnoses by region compared to the state-wide rate (ACR 2023)



Recommendations for health care providers:

- ❖ Review patient records and contact those who haven't received an annual preventative visit or who are not up to date on their screenings.
- ❖ Motivate patients to receive timely screening for cervical and breast cancers in accordance with USPSTF guidelines.
- ❖ Connect eligible Alaskans to resources such as the [Alaska Breast and Cervical Screening Assistance Program](#) to help defray the financial burden of cancer screening and diagnosis.
- ❖ Recommend vaccination for patients aged 9-26 to get immunized against HPV.
- ❖ Frame HPV vaccination as cancer prevention, rather than prevention of sexually transmittable infections.

Data Sources and References

- 1) Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2016-2022); <https://alaska-dph.shinyapps.io/BRFSS/>.
- 2) US Preventive Services Task Force, Curry SJ, Krist AH, et al. Screening for Cervical Cancer: US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. JAMA. 2018; 320(7): 674. doi: 10.1001/jama.2018.10897
- 3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). HPV and Cancer. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/index.html>. Accessed 11/26/2024.
- 4) America's Health Rankings. HPV Vaccination in United States. https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Immunize_HPV. Accessed 01/14/2025.
- 5) Alaska Cancer Registry, HAVRS. Incidence of Cancers Associated with Screening and Modifiable Risk Factors: Alaska 2015-2019. Feb 2023.
- 6) SEER Cancer Stat Facts. SEER. Accessed January 27, 2025. <https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/index.html>
- 7) US Preventive Services Task Force, Nicholson, WK, et al. Screening for Breast Cancer: US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. JAMA. 2024; 331(22): 1918. doi: 10.1001/jama.2024.5534