

Cancer on the Flathead Reservation

CANCER BURDEN FACTS

This fact sheet provides information describing the burden of cancer among American Indians living on or near the Flathead Reservation. American Indian residents of Flathead, Lake, Missoula, and Sanders Counties were used to estimate the burden of cancer on the Flathead Reservation.

- **584 American Indians on the Flathead Reservation were diagnosed with cancer from 2012–2021. Therefore, on average there is about 58 new cases of cancer a year.**
- **Cancer incidence on the Flathead Reservation was higher than among White Montanans living in the Flathead Reservation counties and statewide (Figure 1).**
- **Five (5) kinds of cancer account for 57% of all cancers that occur on the Flathead Reservation (Figure 2).**
- **Significantly more cases of lung, colorectal, female breast, and kidney cancer were diagnosed in American Indians on the Flathead Reservation than would be expected if the rate were the same as White residents in the region (Figure 2).**
- **182 American Indians on the Flathead Reservation died because of cancer from 2012–2021. That is on average 18 deaths each year.**

Montana Cancer Control Programs

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<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/Cancer/DataStatistics>

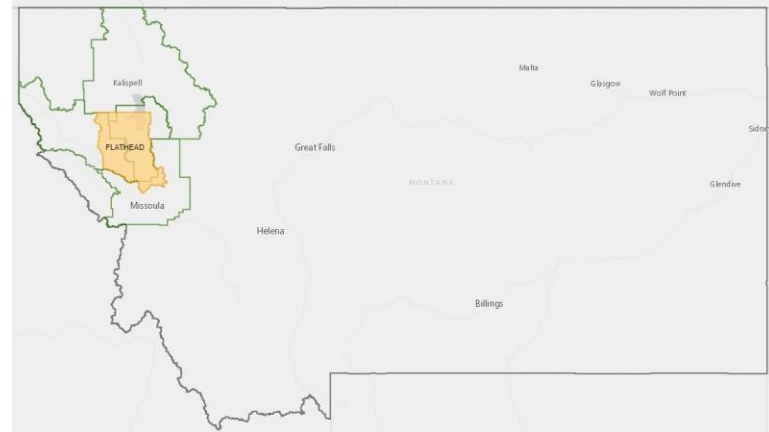


Figure 1: All-site cancer incidence (new cases) rates among **American Indian** residents compared to **White** residents, Montana, 2012–2021

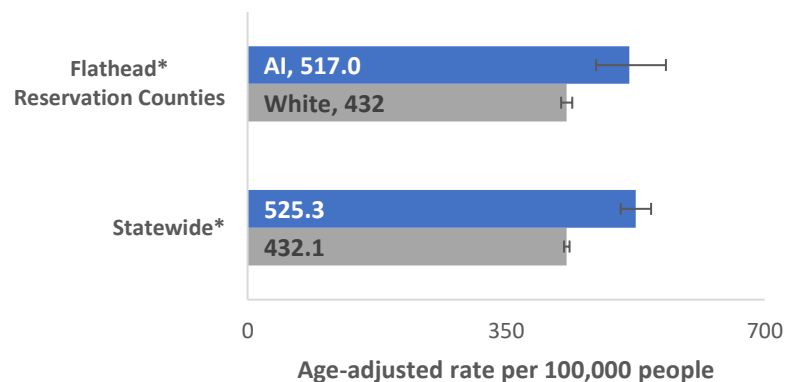
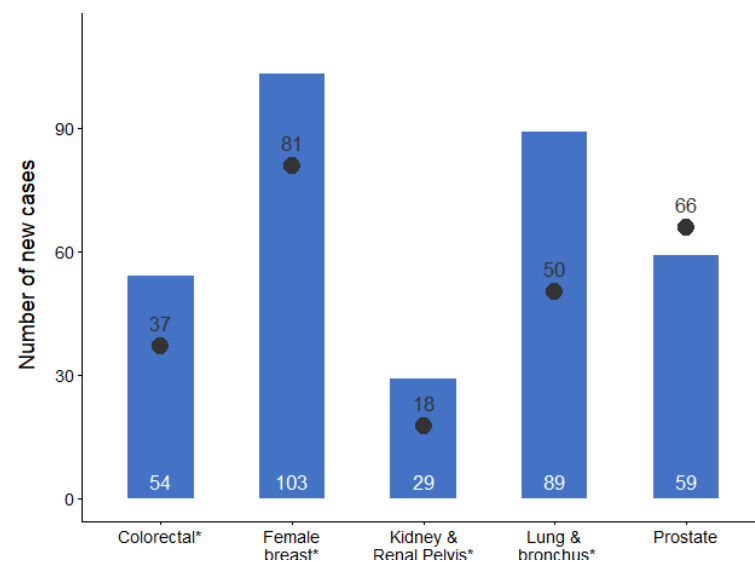


Figure 2: **Observed** compared to **expected (●)** number of new cases of cancer by cancer site among American Indian residents of the Flathead Reservation Counties, 2012–2021



Source: MT Tumor Registry

*Statistically significantly different ($p < 0.05$)



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- **Cancer mortality on the Flathead Reservation was greater than among White Montanans in the reservation counties and statewide (Figure 3).**

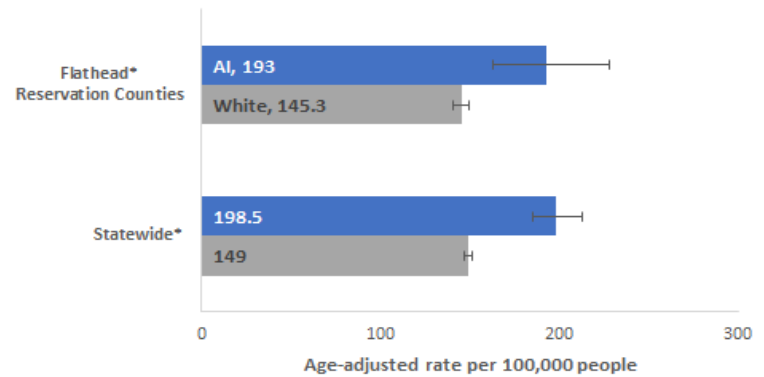
Key facts about cancer prevention and early detection

- **More than half (58%) of Montana American Indian adults have been screened for colorectal cancer. This was lower than the percentage of White Montanans (Figure 4).**
- **Obesity was also high among Montana American Indians (Figure 5). Obesity increases the risk of several types of cancer including breast, colorectal, and kidney cancers.**
- **Percent of American Indian adults who report themselves as a current cigarette smoker fell from 31% in 2021 to 25% in 2023 (Figure 5). This indicates an important, positive trend, which must continue as smoking greatly increases a person's risk for getting at least 13 types of cancer, including lung, colorectal, and kidney. Smoking among Montana American Indians remains higher than in White Montanans (Figure 5).**

†Women aged 50+ who have had a mammogram within the past two years were up to date on breast cancer screening; women aged 21-65 years who have had a pap test within the past three years were up to date on cervical cancer screening; men and women aged 50-75 who have had colonoscopy in the past 10 years, flexible sigmoidoscopy in the past 5 years, or a blood stool test in the past 1 year were up to date on colorectal cancer screening.

¹Colorectal and Breast data are from 2022, cervical cancer data is from 2020

Figure 3: All-site cancer mortality rates among **American Indian** residents compared to **White** residents, Montana, 2012—2021



Source: MT Vital Statistics

Figure 4: Percent of adults who are up to date† on Colorectal, Cervical, and Breast Cancer screening among **American Indian** residents compared to **White** residents, Montana¹.

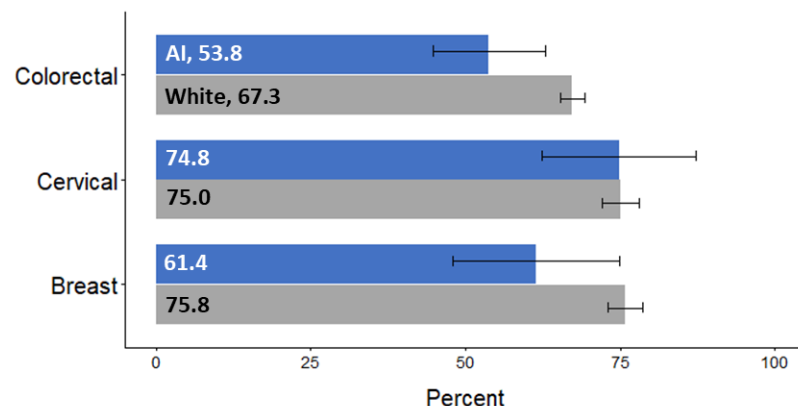
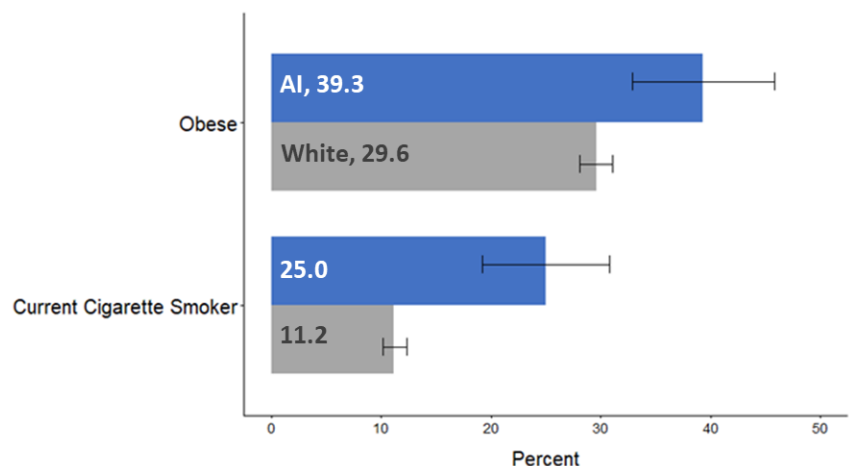


Figure 5: Proportion of adults who are a current smoker or obese among **American Indian** residents compared to **White** residents, Montana, 2023



Source: MT Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System