



CERVICAL CANCER & LATIN@S* IN FLORIDA: THE FIGHT FOR PREVENTION & HEALTH EQUITY

Cervical cancer is highly preventable, but women of color, including Latin@s*, remain more likely to suffer and die from this disease. Unfortunately, Latin@s, immigrant women, and women of color face systemic barriers such as cost, lack of available clinics, insufficient culturally- and linguistically-competent health systems, and discriminatory immigration policies that make it difficult for individuals and communities to access the routine healthcare they need to prevent and treat the disease.

In this document, the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) provides the latest statistics regarding Latin@s and cervical cancer nationally and in Florida. We conclude by providing policy recommendations that, if enacted, would narrow cervical cancer inequities, increase access to routine gynecological care, and improve the health of Latin@s and immigrant women in Florida.

LATIN@S FACE DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH RATES OF CERVICAL CANCER – A LARGELY PREVENTABLE DISEASE

- According to the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Latinas have the highest cervical cancer incidence rates and black women experience the highest mortality rates.¹ In fact, the cervical cancer incidence rate among Latinas residing in the U.S. is about 64 percent higher than among non-Latina, white women.²
- Latinas experience the highest cervical cancer incidence rates in every region of the country of any racial/ethnic group.³
- In Florida, Miami-Dade County has one of the highest mortality rates for cervical cancer, equal to or higher than Florida's overall state incidence rate.⁴ Sixty-five percent of residents in Miami-Dade County are Latin@.⁵
- Over 51 percent of women ages 18 and over have received a Pap test in the past year in Florida,⁶ and researchers have noted that specific interventions are needed to increase cervical cancer screenings among different Latin@ communities.⁷
- One study showed that immigrant Cuban and Haitian women accessed regular screenings for cervical, breast, and colorectal cancers at lower rates in comparison to national averages.⁸ Participation in cervical cancer screening was significantly lower for Haitian women in Little Haiti.⁹
- Because Latinas experience high rates of cervical cancer incidence, nationally and in Florida, it is highly likely that Latin@ lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgender persons with intact cervixes also experience cervical cancer. However, there is little research on cervical cancer screening rates in LGBTQ** communities of color.¹⁰
- Contrary to common myths, Latin@s and women of color do not experience higher rates of cervical cancer due to more frequent sexual activity. Latin@s experience persistent systemic barriers to cervical cancer prevention, screening, and treatment.

CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

- The Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program¹¹ offers free or low-cost cancer detection screenings to eligible persons. To determine eligibility, a person should call their County Health Department or call the American Cancer Society National Hotline at 1-800-227-2345 to get more information on the program.
- From 2013 to 2014, Florida piloted the Reach and Connect Project, which provided funding for part-time community health workers seeking to increase breast and cervical cancer screening rates among underserved communities. The program also provided follow-up screenings to women seeking these services or Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccinations.¹² The program is now offered in specific zip codes where persons have high rates of breast and cervical cancer diagnoses at later stages.¹³

NLIRH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION IN FLORIDA

- **Expand Medicaid.** Florida has currently not expanded Medicaid, leaving 28 percent of eligible Latin@s without access to quality, affordable health care. Without access to health insurance, many Latin@s cannot gain the services they need to prevent and treat cervical cancer.
- **Ensure Florida's data collection efforts are inclusive of all communities,**¹⁴ including people of color and LGBTQ communities, and implement efforts that collect and report data relevant for understanding and addressing cancer-related disparities, including disparities related to gender identity, sexual orientation, sex assigned at birth, race, ethnicity, language, disability status, and age, including those who identify with multiple communities.



- **Ensure all transgender persons can access the preventive health services made available under the Women’s Health Amendment to the Affordable Care Act.** These services include: contraception, mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, prenatal care, and others.
- **Support the development of a workforce that includes cancer researchers and clinical trainees that represent communities of color, LGBTQ communities, and others who are disproportionately impacted by cancer in Florida.**¹⁵

REFERENCES

*Note: The authors of this fact sheet, conscious of the importance of gender equality in the production of educational materials in the English language, have incorporated neutral terms throughout this document. Specifically, we have used the “@” sign to represent the diversity of our community and to include persons who do not conform to traditional gender identities. Due to the limitations of data collection, we use “Latina(s)” or “women” where research only shows findings for cisgender women, including Latinas.

**Note: “LGBTQ” and similar terms denote lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

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