



# minnesota cancer alliance summit

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**2026** | *the power of collaboration*

February 26, 2026

McNamara Alumni Center

Minneapolis, MN



# Breakout Session #3

Ski-U-Mah

February 25, 2026

McNamara Alumni Center



# Breast Cancer Champions: A Peer-to-Peer Program to Reduce the Burden of Breast Cancer in Communities of African Heritage in Minnesota

*Gay Lynn Richards, DNP, RN, MPH*

*Benita Robinson, AA*

*Fowzia Abdullahi, CHW*

*Minister Dr. Ni Ora Hokes, EdD, CHW*



# Financial Disclosure Statement

- There are no relevant financial disclosures for this session.



# The Breast Cancer Champions: A Peer-to-Peer program to reduce the burden of breast cancer in communities of African Heritage in MN

Gay Lynn Richards DNP RN MPH

Minister Dr. Ni Ora Hokes EdD CHW, Fowzia Abdullahi CHW, Benita Robinson AA



Minnesota Cancer Alliance



# Three sisters from St Peter



# Meet the Panel



# Objectives

1. Examine the current landscape of breast cancer in the U.S and MN
2. Summarize breast cancer in women of African heritage & list factors that contribute to the difference in breast cancer health outcomes
3. Describe the Breast Cancer Champion intervention; aims, history, metrics, & challenges
4. Propose a future application of the model

*And dream a little bit*



1 in 8

women will **get breast cancer** in their lifetime

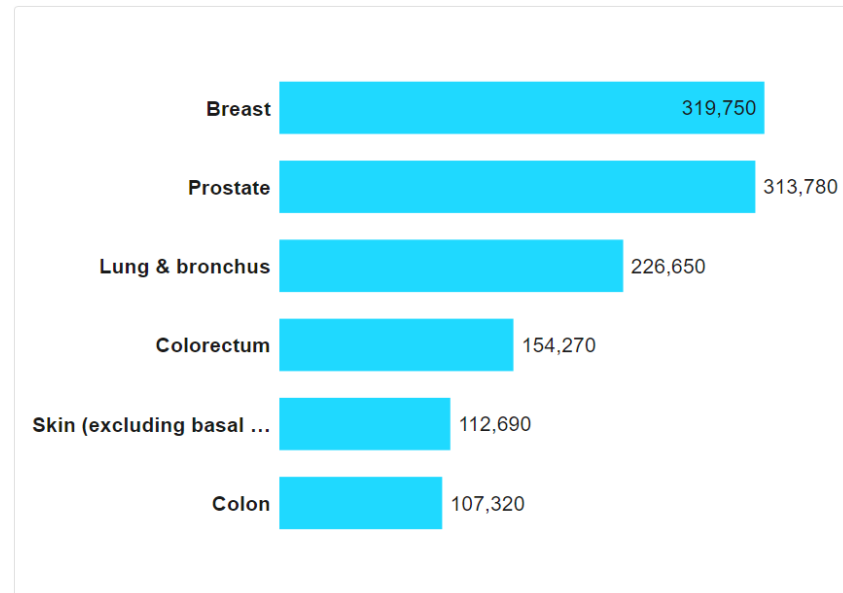


# Breast Cancer Landscape

## 2025 Estimated New Cancer Cases

### Cases by Cancer Type

View by: Sex:  Cancer Type:



©American Cancer Society, 2025

Colorectum includes colon, rectum, and appendix.

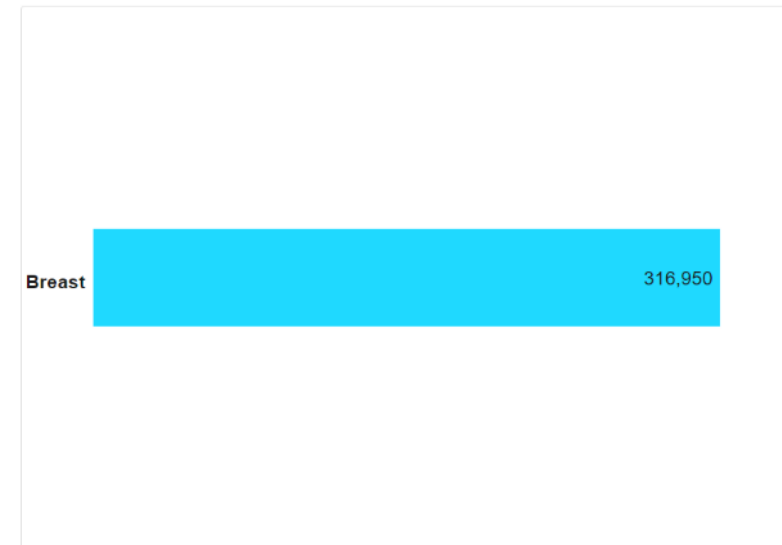
Male & female breast cancers combined for whole U.S.

Urinary bladder includes in situ cases.

## 2025 Estimated New Cancer Cases

### Cases by Cancer Type

View by: Sex:  Cancer Type:



©American Cancer Society, 2025

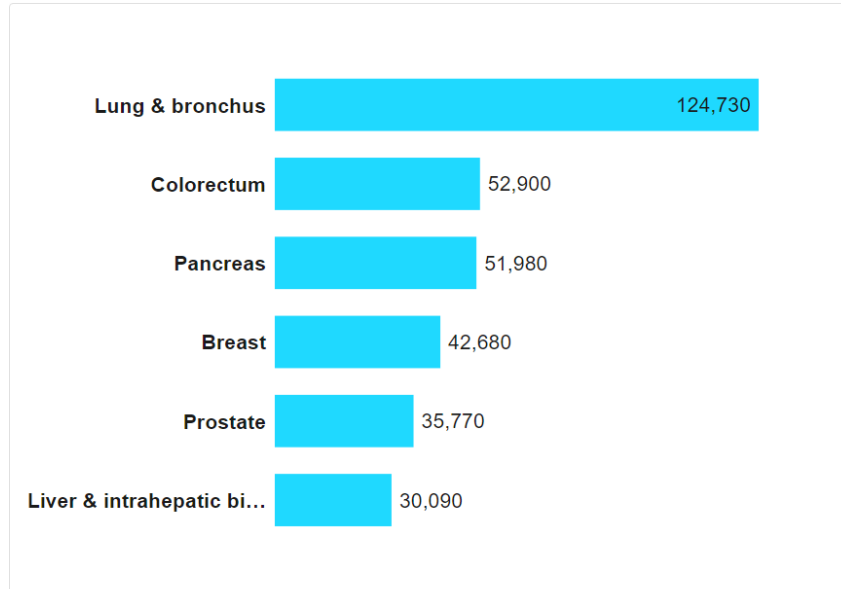


# Breast Cancer Landscape

## 2025 Estimated Cancer Deaths

### Deaths by Cancer Type

Sex:  Cancer Type:   
View by:

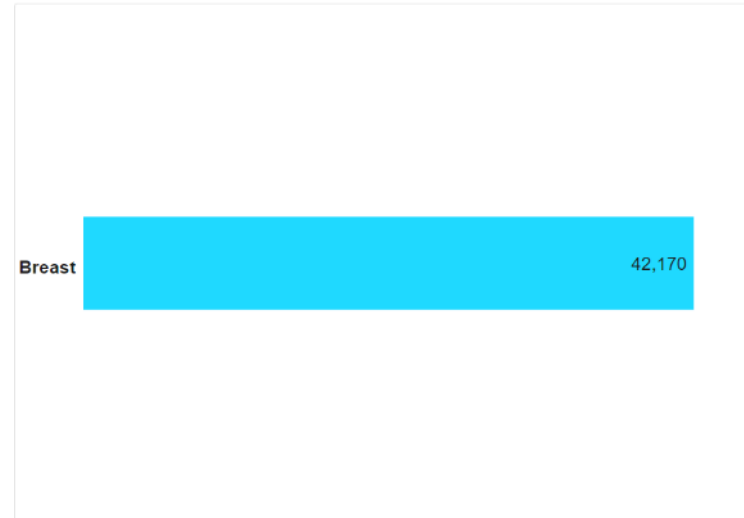


©American Cancer Society, 2025  
Colorectum includes deaths from colon, rectum, and appendix.  
Male & female breast cancers combined for whole U.S.  
Urinary bladder includes in situ cases.

## 2025 Estimated Cancer Deaths

### Deaths by Cancer Type

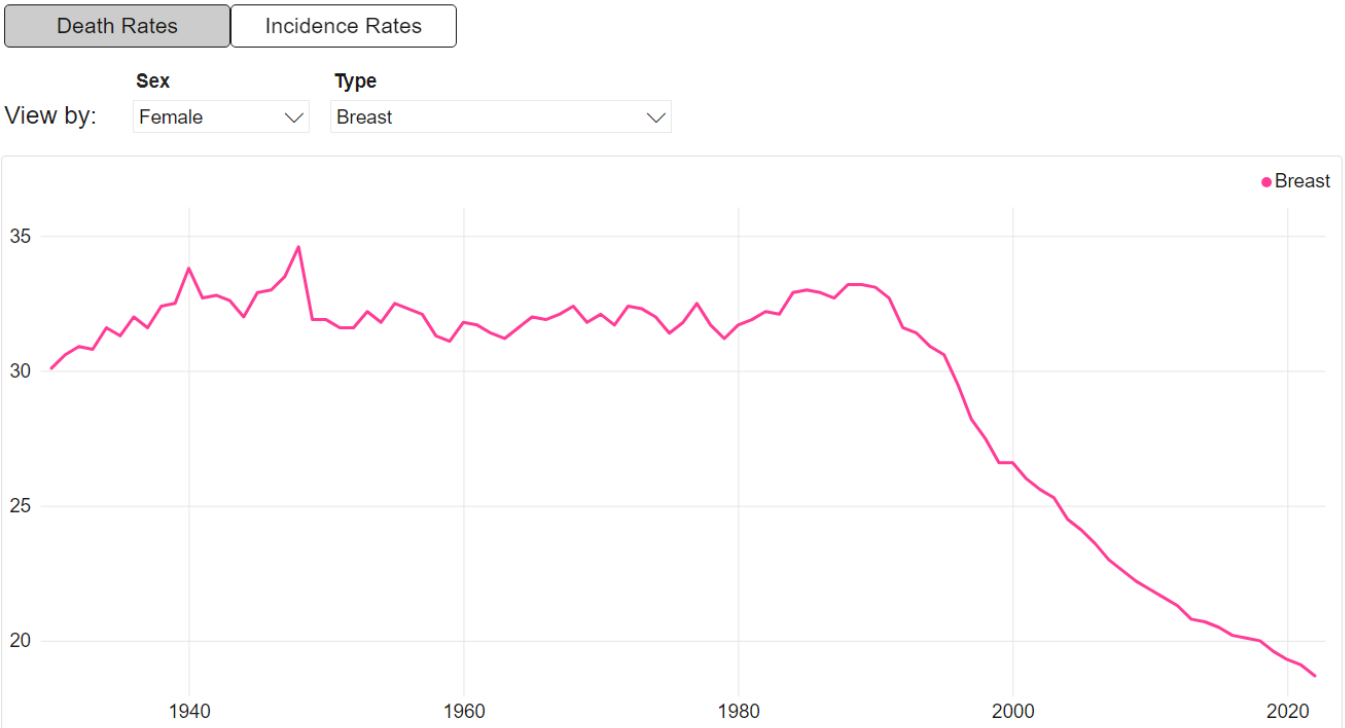
Sex:  Cancer Type:   
View by:



©American Cancer Society, 2025



# Trends in Breast Cancer Mortality

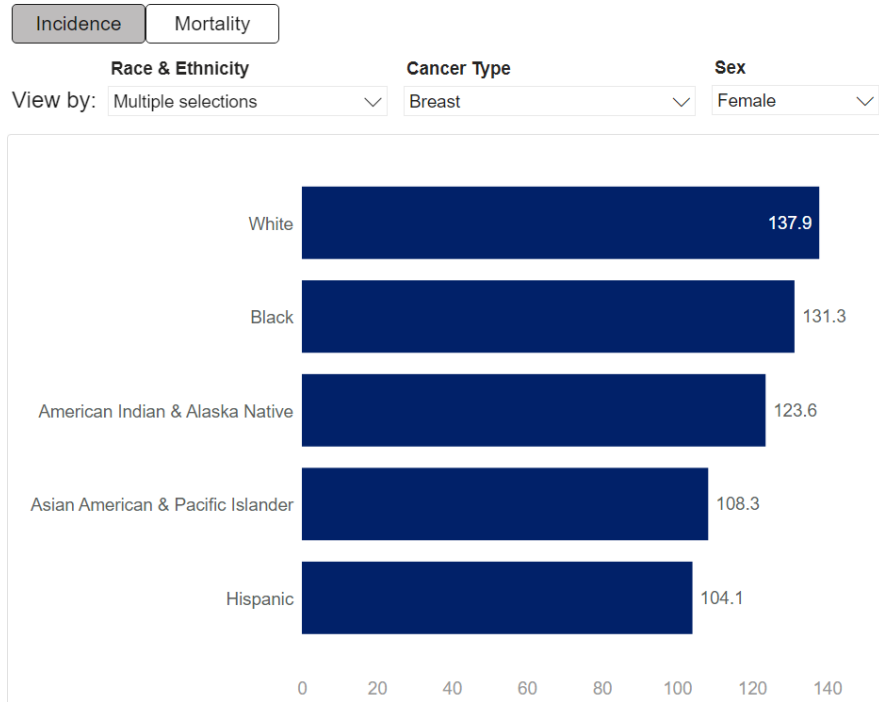


©American Cancer Society, 2025  
Data Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022  
Average annual rate per 100,000, age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population.



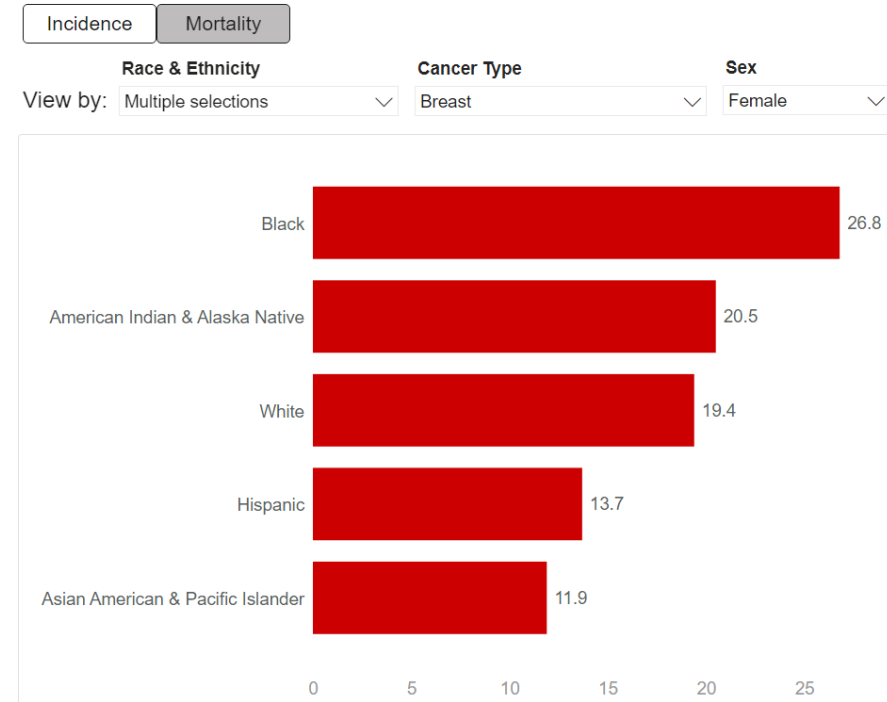
# Differences in Breast Cancer Health Outcomes

National Incidence Rates By Race and Ethnicity (2017-2021)



©American Cancer Society, 2025  
 Data source: North American Association of Central Cancer Registries, 2024  
 Rate per 100,000, age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Incidence is adjusted for delays when possible.

National Mortality Rates By Race and Ethnicity (2018-2022)



©American Cancer Society, 2025  
 Data source: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024  
 Rate per 100,000, age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population.





# Minnesota 2026



~ 4,800-5,200 women diagnosed annually with breast cancer in MN (5,670)  
~ 600 will die from breast cancer (640)  
~62,000 living with a present or past diagnosis of breast cancer

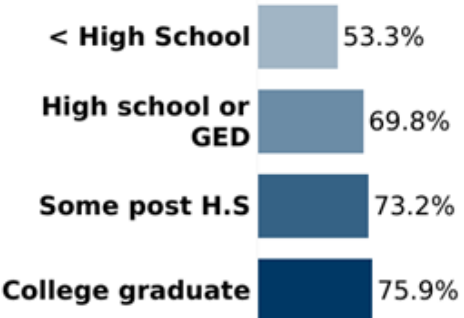


# Breast Cancer in MN At-A-Glance

73%

of Minnesota women 40+ years old have ..

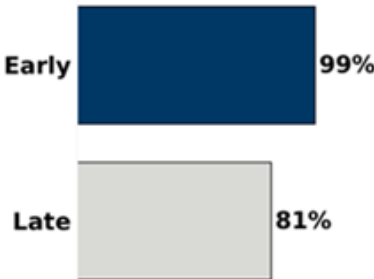
Mammogram screening rates increase with education.



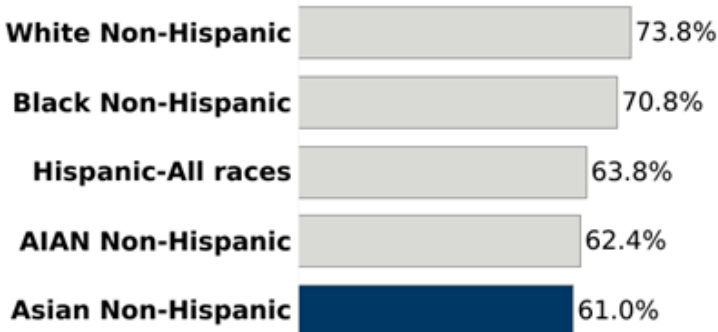
93%

Five-year survival rate for Minnesota women diagnosed with brea..

Survival is much higher when diagnosed early.

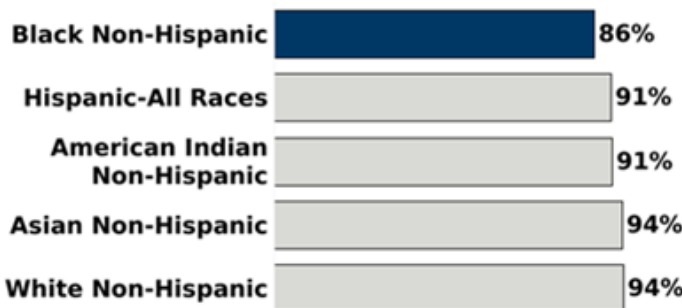


Asian Minnesota women of any race have the lowest rates of mammogram screening.



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System - 2022

Black Minnesota women have the lowest five-year survival.

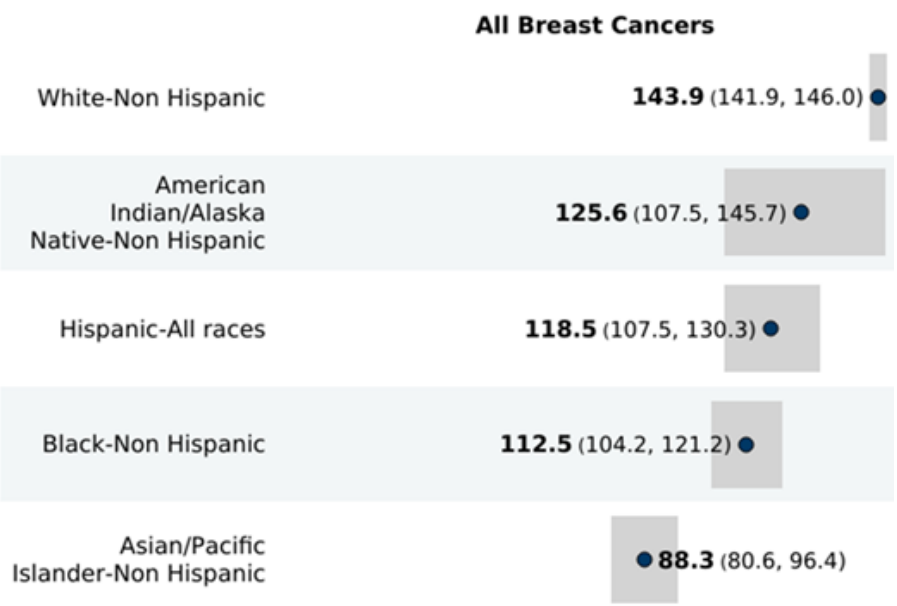


Minnesota Cancer Reporting System, vital status follow-up in 2021. Survival calculated is 5-Year relative survival. Age standardized to the International Cancer Survival Standard 1 - Ages 15+.

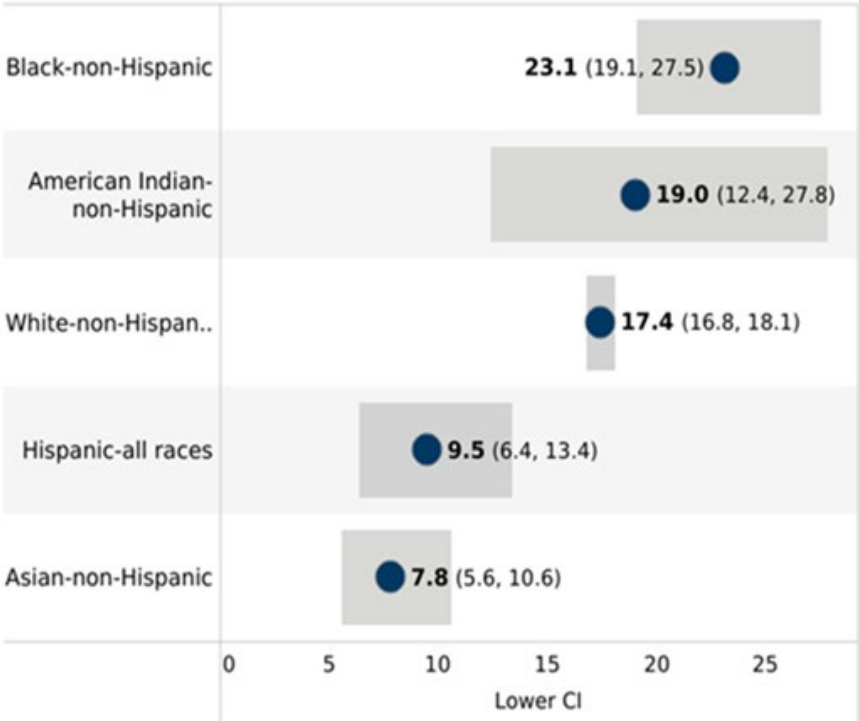


# Incidence & Death by Race and Ethnicity

Stage at Diagnosis  
 Grey bars are 95% confidence intervals  
 All Breast Cancers



Rates/100,000 are age adjusted to the US 2000 census.  
 Grey bars are 95% confidence intervals

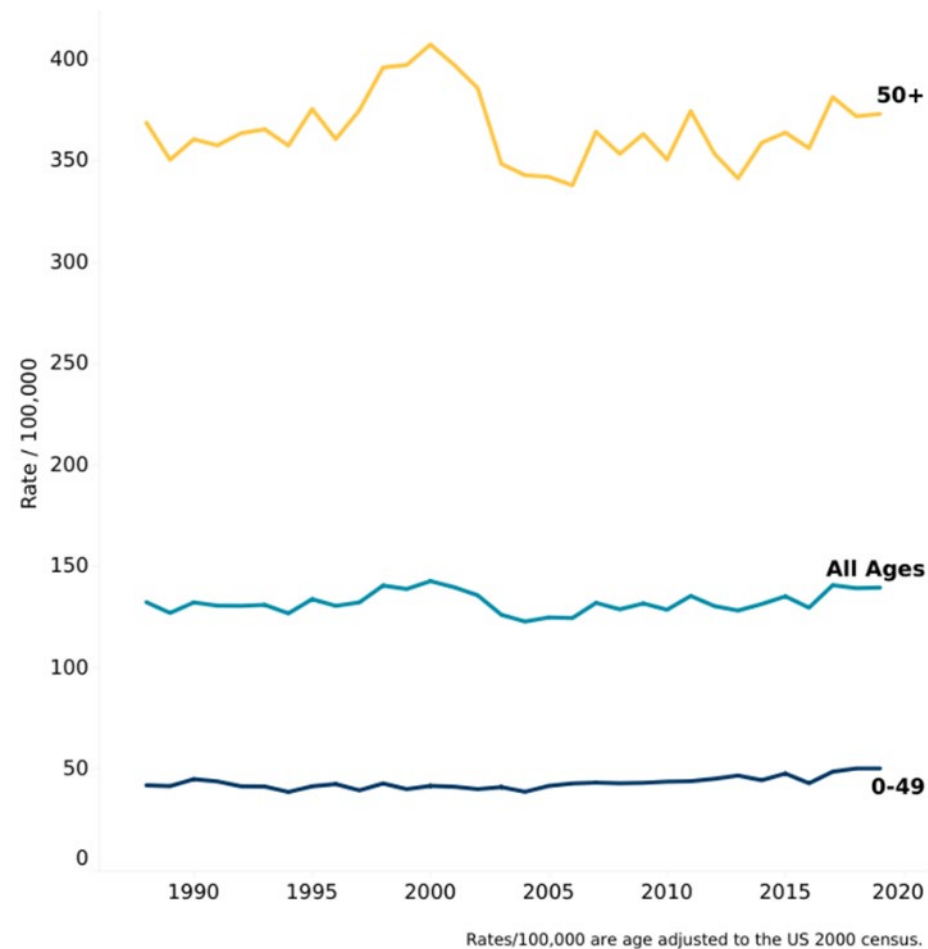


Rates/100,000 are age adjusted to the US 2000 census.  
 Grey bars are 95% confidence intervals

Minnesota Department of Health Cancer Dashboard  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mcrs/data/dashbc.html>



# Mortality Rates 1988-2019: 2.3% decline/yearly all ages

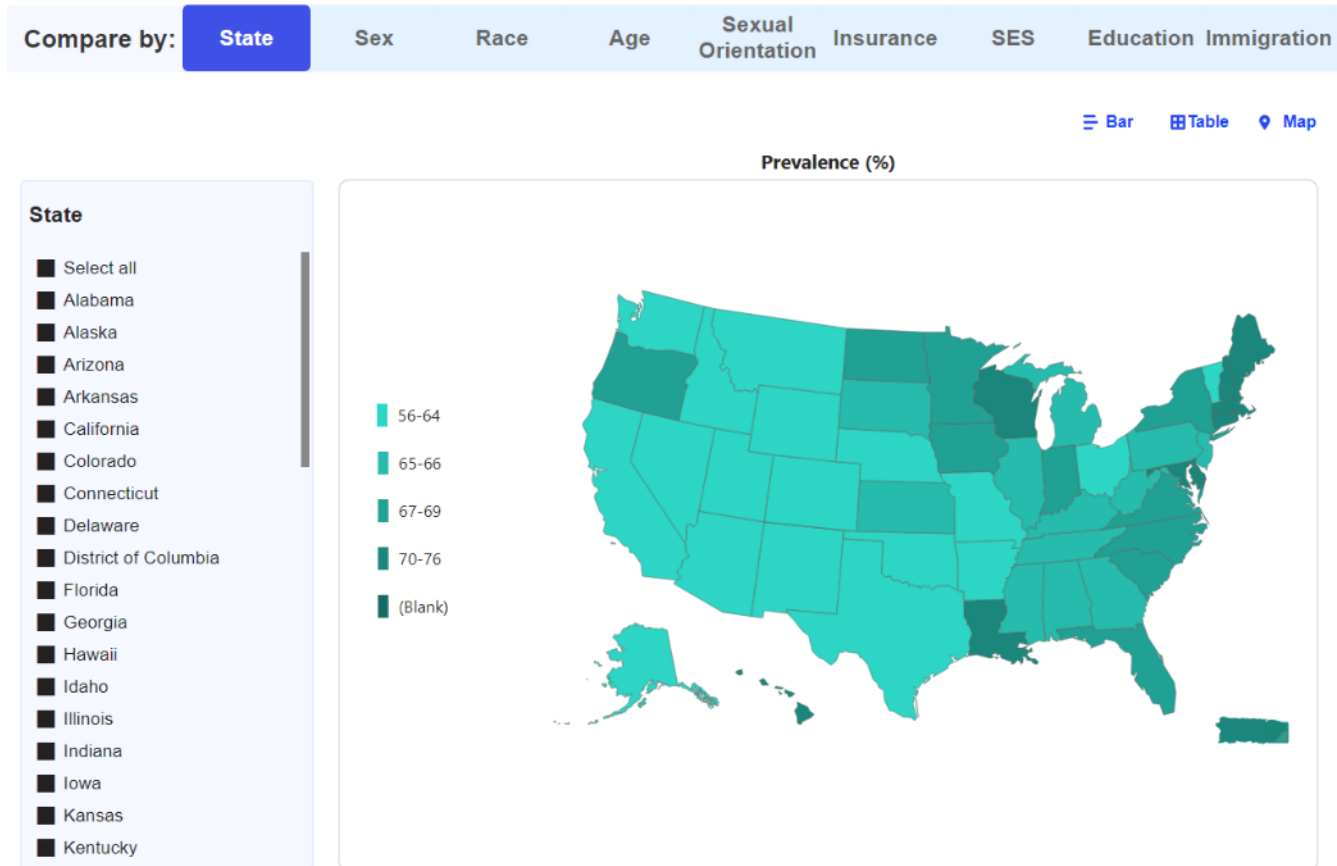


<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mcrs/data/dashbc.html>



# A look at Screening Prevalence

## Up-to-date mammography, women 45 years and older by State,



©American Cancer Society, 2025

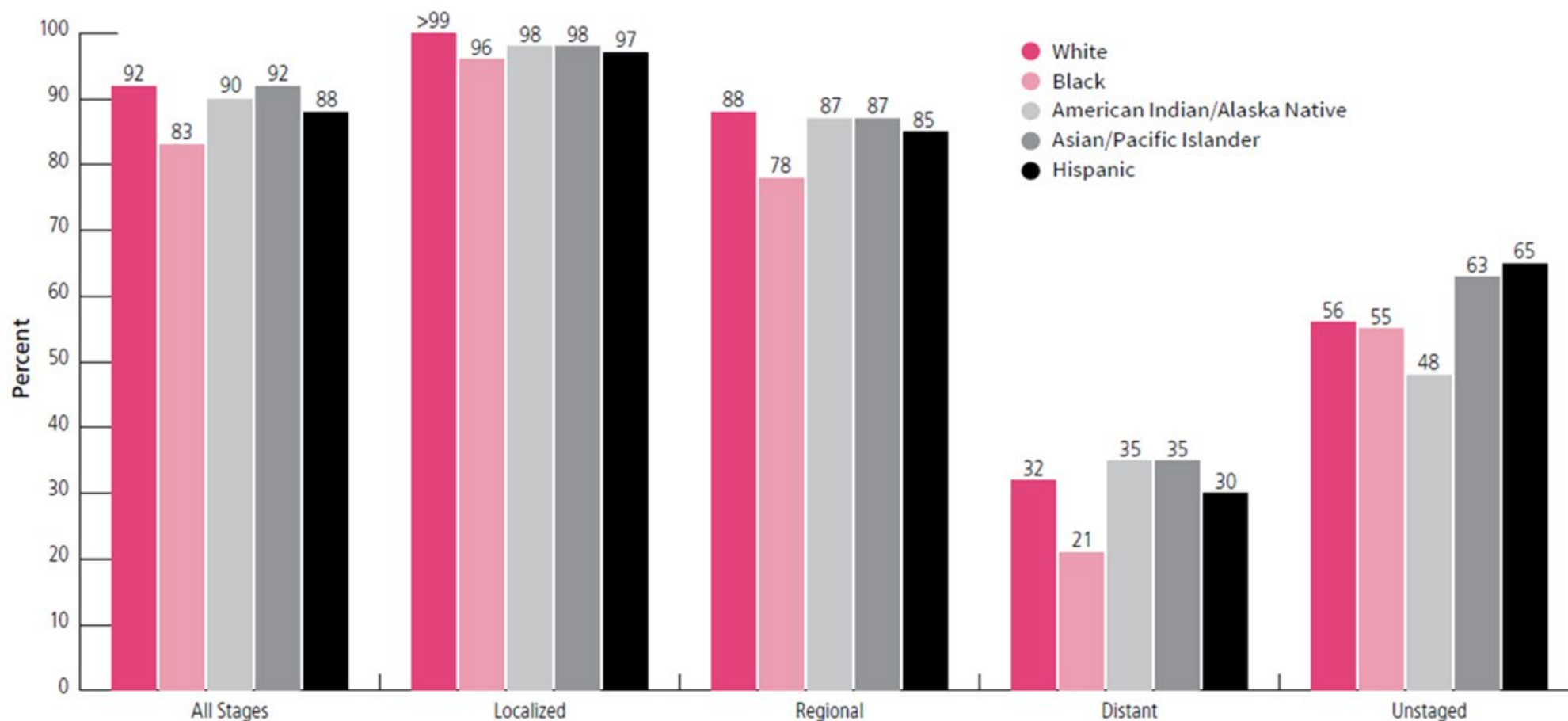
Data source: State-level data: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Overall national estimates and by demographics: National Health Interview Survey, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023  
Up-to-date with American Cancer Society guidelines: mammogram within the past year (ages 45-54 years) or past two years (ages >=55 years). Estimates are age-adjusted to the year 2000 US standard population using 3 age groups: 45-49, 60-64, and >=65 years.



**30%** of breast cancers  
might be prevented by  
changing health behaviors



Figure 11. Five-year Relative Survival Rates (%) by Stage at Diagnosis and Race/Ethnicity, US, 2012-2018



Note: Race is exclusive of Hispanic origin. Survival rates are based on patients diagnosed during 2012-2018 and followed through 2019. Survival for AIAN individuals is based on patients diagnosed in PRCD counties.

Source: SEER Program, 17 SEER registries, National Cancer Institute, 2022.

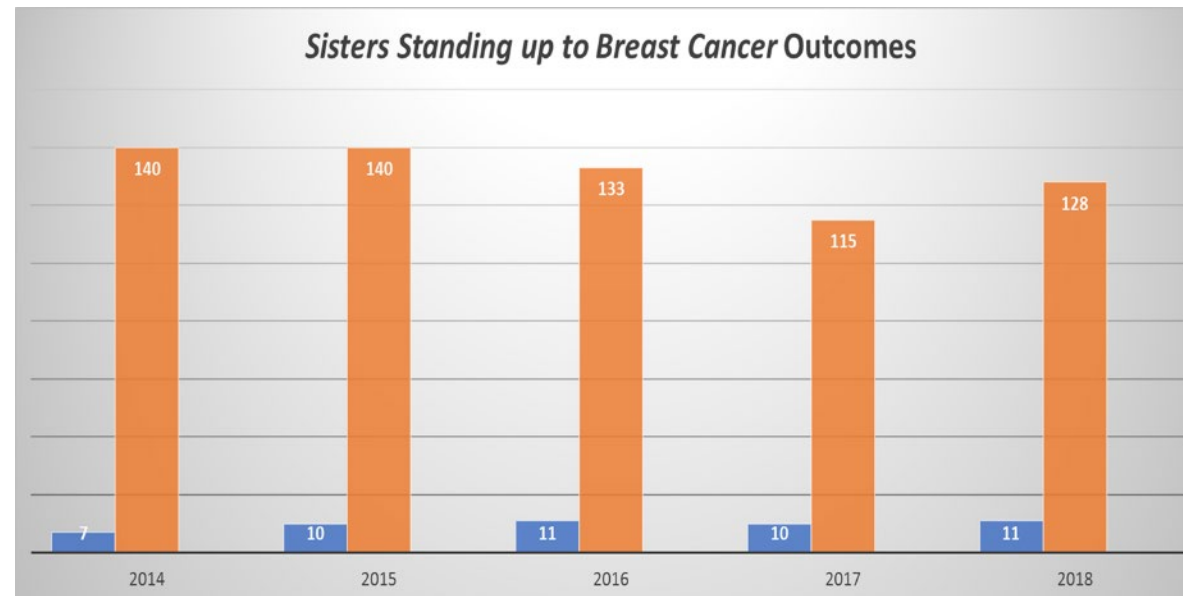
©2022, American Cancer Society, Inc., Surveillance and Health Equity Science





# In the Beginning

*Sisters Standing Up to Breast Cancer* was launched in 2013 by Benita Robinson and Gay Lynn Richards to prioritize screening black women for breast cancer at trusted, community locations such as churches and laid the foundation for Breast Cancer Champions.



# What is the Champions project?



Breast Cancer Champions builds on this community project by expanding capacity for community education, screening, training more community women, and building organizational ties. In 2019 approached by Sage & Masonic researchers & secured funding to demonstrate the impact of the CHAMPIONS on enrollment of Black women into Sage. The work continues in communities of African heritage, Immigrant African & African American, health fairs, mammography events, conferences & presentations.

**CHAMPIONS** are there, meeting you where you were you live



Sage (MDH) and the University of Minnesota (Dr. Haynes) analyzed where breast cancer screening was most in need.

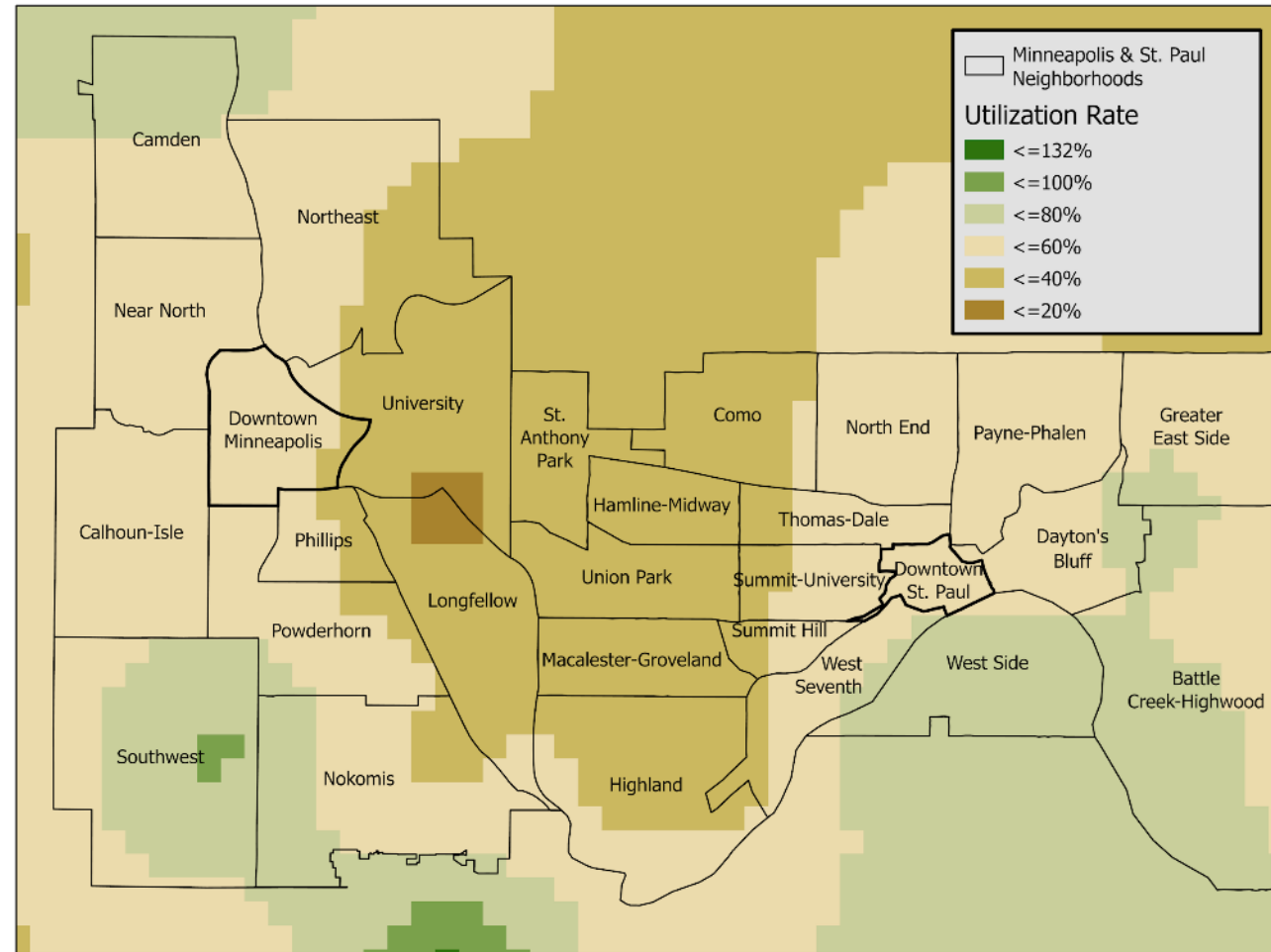
Funding secured, CEARCH-Community Engagement to Advance Research & Community Health.

Champions are community experts best able to reach women in their communities for screening.

Champions supported training, networking groups, branding & swag, quarterly stipend and access to knowledgeable professionals.

Launch in 2020- pivot

## Screening Rates of Sage Eligible Women in the Twin Cities



# Communities of African Heritage in MN

Black women die from breast cancer at a higher rate (41%) than women from all other racial identities.

Approximately 15% of Black (African American and Immigrant African) Minnesotan women are diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer, which has lower 5-year survival rates (28%) compared to early-stage breast cancer (99%).

These women die because they have inconsistent access to healthcare and often are afraid to be screened, which results in delayed or missed breast cancer diagnosis.

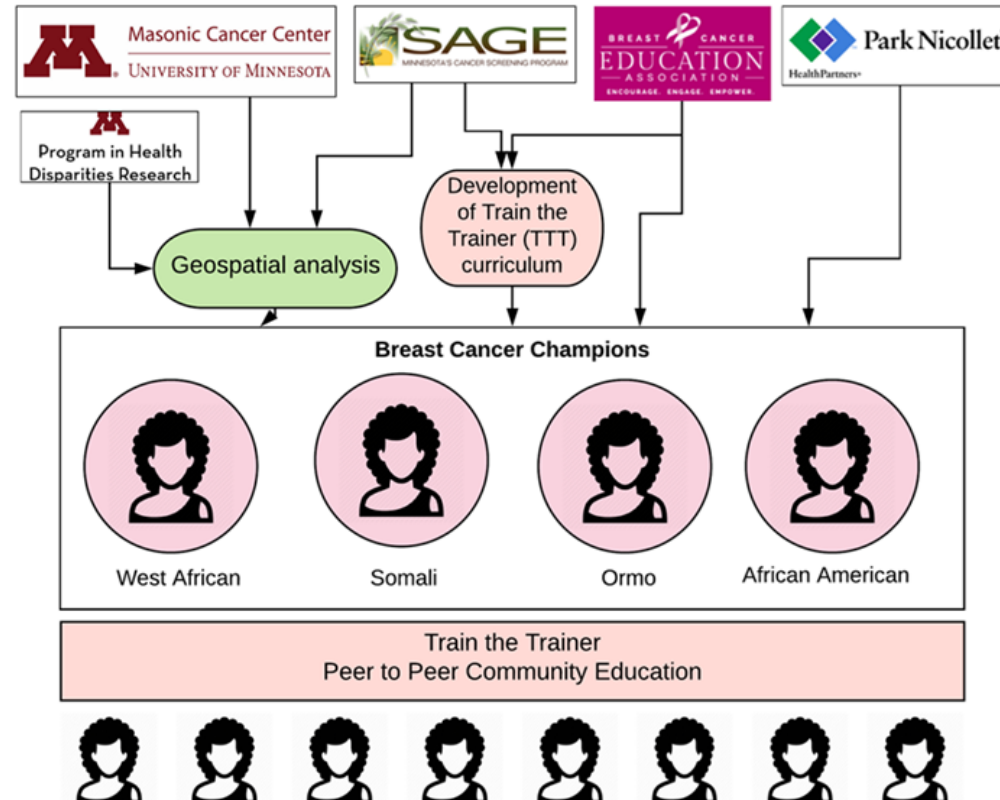
Black women experience a higher rate of Triple Negative breast cancer and are often diagnosed with advanced cancer, which is harder to survive.

~50-61% Immigrant African women living in the U.S. have had a mammogram



# Breast Cancer Champions

Our Mission: To educate women on breast cancer health increase access and utilization of health care with a focus on breast cancer screening, so that more breast cancers are detected early and more women survive breast cancer. With an emphasis on serving black women reducing disparities and advancing health equity.



# BREAST CANCER CHAMPIONS



Meeting you where you live



# Components of the Champions Project



## **Empower Champions**

Stipend • Education • Community • Branding



## **Community Education**

Connect • Educate • Support • Refer • Screen



## **Train New Champions**

Recruit • Train • Expand Reach into Communities



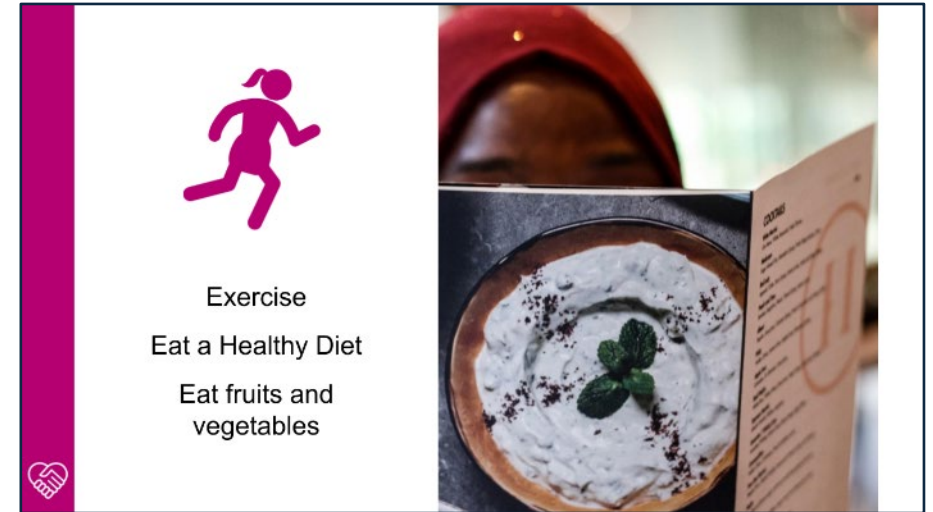
# Champion Requirements

- ☑ Attend orientation
- ☑ Sign a contract and a W9 form
- ☑ Attend Training – 3 hours
- ☑ First two weeks of a quarter create and submit work plan
- ☑ 10 hours community education a month
- ☑ Attend monthly Champions meetings (Zoom)
- ☑ Talk with program RAs and evaluators
  - Bi-weekly with UMN RA
  - Exit interview
- ☑ Submit progress (RA support)



# PEARL rubric – Culturally Tailored Materials

**P**lain Language and Understandability  
**E**xplicit Statistics and Graphs  
**A**ffirmative Framing  
**R**epresentative Content  
**L**ocal Connection



# Breast Cancer Champions



# Peer-to-Peer Education & Champion Choice

Champions drive the activities of the program through creation of workplans

Decentralized

Coordinator provides brainstorming support

Formal and Informal activities



# Social Media

**Breast Cancer Champions**  
November 5 at 2:19 PM · 🌐

Walk-in mammograms! Champions are supporting on-site, walk-in breast cancer screening at the following locations:  
Nov 7th 10 am to 2 pm – Shiloh Temple 1201 West Broadway Ave Minneapolis  
Nov 8th 11 am to 3:30 pm – Wayman AME Church 1221 N 7 Minneapolis... [See More](#)



811 People Reached      83 Engagements

👍❤️ 6

👍 Like      💬 Comment      ➦ Share

**Breast Cancer Champions**  
October 16 · 🌐

Hi, my name is Lu and I am a three-time breast cancer DRIVER – not survivor, not thriver. If you knew me you would know that I DRIVE th conversation to breast cancer advocacy and being empowered. Breast cancer is not the end of the world. I was just 29 years old who was first diagnosed - I knew something was wrong and I kept pushin until a provider would listen to me. Telling my family and friends was hard, but a fellow cancer patient gave me some good advice – don't fe... [See More](#)



956 People Reached      128 Engagements

[Boost Post](#)

👍❤️👍 8

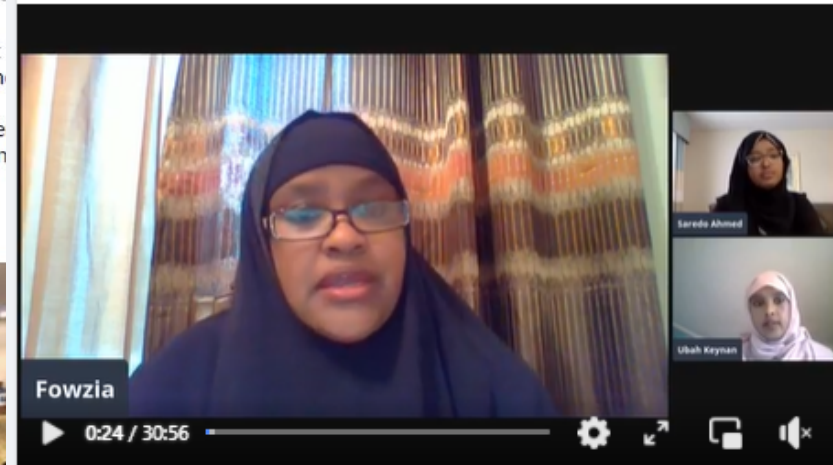
7 Comments 7 Shares

👍 Like      💬 Comment      ➦ Share

**Breast Cancer Champions** was live.  
Published by StreamYard · June 8 · 🌐

Waxaan kugu casuumaynaa Kulan laga hadlayo muhiimadda ay leedahay in lagaa qaado mammogram ka. Waxaan ka hadlo doonaa waxay ay tahay Mammogram. Yaa ubaahan inuu maro, iyo talaabooyinka aad qaadi kartid si aad ubalansatid mammogramka. Waxaa lagaaga jawaabayaa wixii su'aalo ah. Hadii aad xiisaaynaysid inaad kasoo qayb gashid, ku tala gala bisha June 8 deeda saacada markay tahay 6:30pm ilaa 7pm. Barnaamijkani wuxuu ka bixi doonaa Facebook. Like saar boggeena si aad uheshid xasuu... [See more](#)

[See Translation](#)



205 People reached

75 Engagements

[Boost Post](#)



# Breast Cancer Champions: A Community-Academic Partnership Empowering Black Women for Community Outreach for Breast Cancer Education

Hughes KD, Robinson B, Richards G, Okafor A, Haas M, Haynes D

## Aims

- Improve breast cancer outcomes among black women
- Support development of a community-led program to address breast cancer awareness, education, and screening
- Evaluate whether program is generating intended outcomes

## Background

- Breast cancer is common and black women die at higher rates of breast cancer than women of other populations
- Breast Cancer Champions addresses breast cancer disparities in Twin Cities black communities
- Champions are community experts and peer-to-peer breast cancer educators that reach women in their communities
- Sage Programs is Champions partner and MN government program that provides free cancer screening
- Champions refer community women to Sage free screening resources, and we tested whether Champions efforts increased Sage screening of black women



## Significance and Next Steps

- Breast Cancer Champions increased free breast cancer screening through Sage Programs in areas that Champions were active in outreach, education and screening activities
- Champions successfully launched at the height of the pandemic
- Flexible and decentralized planning of education activities allowed for many COVID-safe approaches to reach black women for breast cancer education and screening

## More Information

Contact: Kelly D. Hughes, PhD  
 Kelly.d.hughes@state.mn.us  
 Sage Programs  
 Minnesota Department of Health



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
 Driven to Discover®

This evaluation was supported by the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, grant UL1TR002494. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.



## Methods

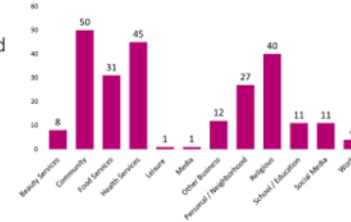
Step 1: Champions conduct education activities (8/1/2020 – 11/30/2021)

- Champions create their own workplans (quarterly)
- RA called Champions weekly to document work plan activity: Location, activity, women reached, and women screened



Champions were active in their communities even though the project launched during the pandemic

- 14 Champions
- 244 activities completed
- 2,300+ women reached
- 448 women referred to screening
- 228 women screened

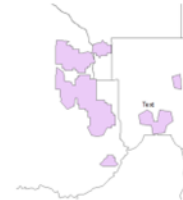


Step 2: Champion activities were geocoded

- Addresses were found for all Champions activities with physical location
- Locations geocoded and created polygons of areas of Champion activity



Area of Champions' activities defined



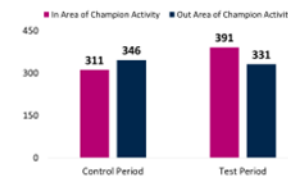
- Champions were active in Anoka, Ramsey and Hennepin counties

Step 3: Sage screening activity for black women inside the area of Champions' activity and time period (test: 8/1/2020 – 11/30/2021) was compared to the previous 15 months (control: 4/1/2019 – 7/30/2020) and outside the area of activity

- Sage participants self-identifying as African American in Anoka, Ramsey, and Hennepin county were geocoded
- Participants in crosstabs were tallied



Champions activities brought more women to Sage screening resources during the period of activity



- $\chi^2 = 6.399$ ,  $N = 1,379$
- $p = 0.0114$

# Successes & Moving Forward

Trained & deployed 30 Champions representing the MN African diaspora

Developed training in digital format

Haynes D, Hughes K, Haas M, Richards GL, Robinson B. Breast Cancer Champions: a peer-to-peer education and mobile mammography program improving breast cancer screening rates for women of African heritage. *Cancer Causes Control*. 2023 Jul;34(7):625-633. doi: 10.1007/s10552-023-01704-z. Epub 2023 May 3. PMID: 37133574; PMCID: PMC10154761.

Champion Evaluation

*"The Champions are a great diverse group of people who have been personally affected by breast cancer and/or have the expertise in breast cancer education and screening and are very influential in their unique communities."*

*"I love the passion these ladies and gentlemen have for this work. I also love the stories of those that were screened and able to catch the cancer before it was too late."*

*"They have a great network and understanding of my African community."*

*"We are a force to be reckoned with."*

Nia Pilot: African American women age 25-40, knowledge & education on breast health, SDoH, quarterly aggregate reports

Business Model: Health Plans & Health Systems

Replication of the Champion model – Culturally tailored, trusted messengers, peer to peer

HACER Mankato: Spanish speaking women in greater MN

Silver Threads: Culturally tailored education & navigation to screening for Hmong women



# Success & Partnerships



ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

Minnesota Cancer Alliance



# Breast Cancer Champions Through the Years December 31, 2025

*We Rock!!!!*



Year	Events/Number with Mammography	Educated	Confirmed as Screened
2014-2017 Sisters Standing up to Breast Cancer	55 mammography events at African American churches	528	528
2019-2020 Breast Cancer Champions	244 in person or online events/32 with mammography	2,300	228
2022 Sage funding	25 events/9 with mammography	1,200	131
2023 Sage funding	41 events/16 with mammography	2,357	242
2024 Masonic funding	57 events/18 with mammography	4,353	287
2025 Masonic funding through June	39 events/15 with mammography	2,746	205
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>461 events/ 145 with mammography</b>	<b>13,484</b>	<b>1,621</b>



# Liberia in 2027???





# Thank You Partners



ODAM MEDICAL  
Specialist in Primary Care Medicine and Community Health



Sabathani Community Center  
The Heart of South Minneapolis

# Contact Us

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Breast Cancer Education Association <https://breastcancereducation.org/>

Visit the Champion Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/breastcancerchampions/>



# In Memory Luella Williams Survivor, Thriver, Driver

