January 2025 Health Watch & Observations
Spotlight Air Environmental
SAE Public Health Researcher

Cancer Incidence

SELECTED DATA: Illinois Cancer Incidence 2021 (the latest year for which data is available) for all Cancer Sites[1] and All Races.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the cancer incidence in Illinois for 2021 for all types of cancer and all races and ethnicities combined was 36, 592 (male count) and 36, 030 (female count), which gives a total of 72, 622. This gives the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 standard population of 498.0 for males and 492.0 for females[2] (see https://idph.illinois.gov/iscrstats/statebyrace/Show-Statebyrace-Table.aspx). On the other hand, the web map provided by the United States Cancer Statistics (The Official Federal Cancer Statistics) featuring cancer rates for each state for 2021 for "All Types of Cancer, All Ages, All Races and Ethnicities, Male and Female [combined] per 100, 000 people" gives the figure 439 for the United States as a whole. The corresponding figure on the web map for the State of Illinois is shown to be 462.0 (See https://www.cdc.gov/united-states-cancer-statistics/publications/uscs-highlights.html);
and https://gis.cdc.gov/Cancer/USCS/#/AtAGlance/).

When comparing the cancer incidence rate data provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) with those provided by United States Centers of Disease Control (CDC) for the whole nation, one point stands out. This is the fact that the cancer incidence rate for the State of Illinois provided by IDPH is significantly higher than the rate for the United States provided by the CDC. In this regard, it may be helpful also to note, with the help of CDC's web map, the fact that the cancer rate for the State of Illinois is higher compared to that of the nation is also the case for the neighboring Midwestern states of Wisconsin (Cancer rate 469.7), Missouri (443.9), Oklahoma (450.7), etc. This situation leads to a couple of questions: Do these states share similar toxic release inventory profiles arising from the mainstays of their respective agro-industrial economies? Do these states also share health-related inequities among the different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups in terms of levels of exposure to hazardous pollutants and access to health services, which not only underlie differing cancer rates but also affect the outcomes of remedial measures, thus, becoming grounds for issues of environmental justice? These and other related questions will be matters for researching and reporting in the following months.

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[1] The word "sites" indicates the practice of classifying cancers in terms of where in the body they occur: for example, breast cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, brain cancer, etc. Thus, the term "all sites" here refers to all cancers that occur in the different parts of the human body.