

# Bridging the Equity Gap

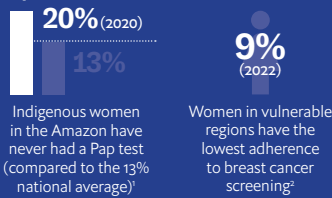
## Cancer Care for Women in Colombia

**Setting the context:** Women in Colombia face significant health disparities based on geography, socioeconomic status and ethnicity, with Indigenous and rural populations experiencing the lowest access to essential cancer screenings.

**“Having a lower socioeconomic level, living in rural areas and having a triple-negative tumor are significant risk factors that increase breast cancer mortality.”**

Gloria Inés Sánchez, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Universidad de Antioquia

**Where a woman lives can significantly impact her health:**



### Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC)

Prevalence

14-21%<sup>4</sup>  
Colombia

Up to 39%<sup>5</sup>  
LATAM

**Impact of TNBC**

Stage of diagnosis, high recurrence rates and disease progression make TNBC a major cause of cancer mortality in Colombia.



37%  
of TNBC patients experience disease progression<sup>7</sup>



61%  
are diagnosed at locally advanced stages (Stage IIIB being the most common at 35%)<sup>8</sup>



39%  
of TNBC patients experience disease recurrence<sup>9</sup>



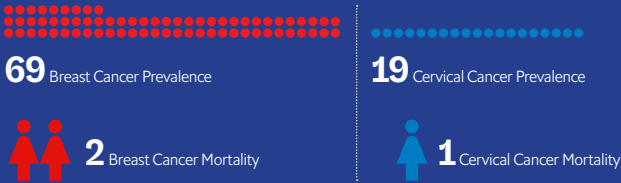
54%  
of TNBC patients die from the disease<sup>10</sup>

**Equity in Health:** Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women encounter greater barriers to healthcare access, exacerbated by cultural, geographic and systemic challenges, which leads to worse breast and cervical cancer outcomes.

**“Many women from Afro-Colombian communities face more challenges in accessing healthcare, particularly because of cultural barriers.”**

Wilson Cubides, Executive Director, Liga Colombiana Contra el Cáncer

### Cancer Status, Risk and Mortality – 2024 (rates per 10,000 people)<sup>3</sup>



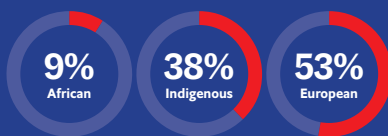
**Afro-Colombian Women:** Cervical cancer risk is disproportionately high due to lower access to healthcare

**Indigenous Women in the Amazon:** The highest cervical cancer mortality risk in Colombia

**19%** of cancer deaths in Indigenous of cancer deaths occur in individuals under 45 years of age, compared to 10% in Mestizos

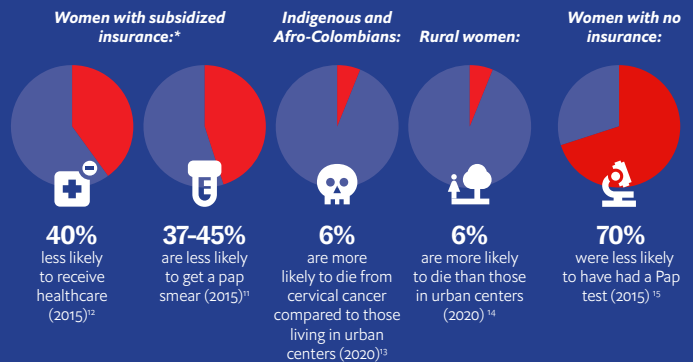
**7%** per year was the increase in cancer mortality among Afro-Colombians between 2011 and 2015

**Average genetic ancestry proportions of Colombian breast cancer patients<sup>6</sup>**  
These genetic ancestry proportions reflect Colombia's diverse population, highlighting how cancer risks and outcomes vary across different ethnic groups, as seen in Afro-Colombian and Indigenous cervical cancer disparities.



### Access and Coverage

**Access to insurance is key to women's health outcomes:<sup>\*</sup>**



<sup>\*</sup> In comparison to contributory insurance

**“Improving the coverage at population level to screening with proper validated technologies such as HPV testing and clinical breast examination and mammography and enforcing the access to diagnosis and treatment is crucial to achieve equity.”**

Gloria Inés Sánchez, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Universidad de Antioquia

### Challenges

- Health Disparities Persist:** Geographic and ethnic disparities in Colombia's healthcare system result in higher mortality rates for marginalized women, thereby emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions.
- Financial Barriers Limit Equity:** Financial barriers and gaps in health insurance coverage prevent equitable access to preventive and life-saving cancer care, particularly for rural, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women.
- Decentralization is Essential:** A more decentralized healthcare infrastructure is essential to ensure that all Colombian women, regardless of location or background, receive timely and adequate cancer treatment and palliative care.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis-KRC, Nereizadeh ZM, Garcia-Palacios JC, Salazar AC. Impact of the universal health insurance benefit on cervical cancer mortality in Colombia. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>2</sup> Espinal JC, Salazar AC, Bustos G, Benavides AP, Pardo A, Agudelo R, Ruiz C, Gaitanar G, Gaitanar C, Capella R, Suarez-Bogues E, Edrington-Schmitt J, Sanchez R. WHO's influence on breast cancer screening guidelines and its association with cervical cancer incidence in Colombia: a national cancer registry-based observational study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>3</sup> WHO. Global Health Data Dashboard. [Internet]. Geneva: Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation; 2024. Available from: <https://ghda.healthdata.org/>. [Accessed April 2024].

<sup>4</sup> Chirba-Bonilla M, Garcia-Palacios JC, Salazar AC. Cervical cancer screening in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ecol Health Hum Environ. 2022;1(1):1-10. doi: 10.1002/ehed.10001

<sup>5</sup> Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>6</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>7</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>8</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>9</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>10</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>11</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>12</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>13</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>14</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4

<sup>15</sup> Diaz-Castaneda C, Sanchez-Correa T, Sanchez-Soto MC, Hernandez-Sanchez G, Garcia C, Diaz C, Ramirez A, Pardo JC, Plata J, Figueroa L, Zabala J. High prevalence of cervical breast cancer among Indigenous women in Colombia: a cross-sectional study. BMC Health Serv Res. 2023;23(1):105. doi: 10.1186/s12913-023-10793-4