



MAY 15, 2024

Maps and Statistics

KEY POINTS

- An average of seven human plague cases are reported each year in the United States.
- Plague occurs in the western U.S., with most cases in northern New Mexico and Arizona.
- More recent plague epidemics have occurred in Africa, Asia, and South America, but most human cases since the 1990s have occurred in Africa.



Plague in the United States

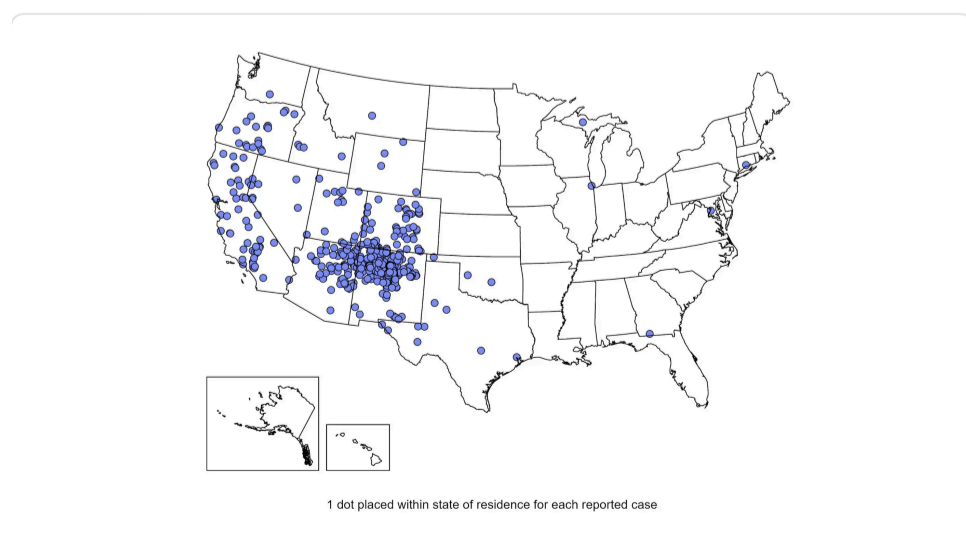
Plague was first introduced into the United States in 1900, from rat-infested steamships that had sailed from affected areas. Epidemics occurred in port cities. The last urban plague epidemic in the United States occurred in Los Angeles from 1924 through 1925. Plague then spread from urban rats to rural rodent species and became entrenched in many areas of the western United States. Since that time, plague has occurred as scattered cases in rural areas. Most human cases in the United States are acquired in two regions:

- Northern New Mexico, northern Arizona, and southern Colorado
- California, southern Oregon, and far western Nevada

Over 80% of United States plague cases have been the [bubonic form](#). In recent decades, an average of seven human plague cases have been reported each year (range: 0–17 cases per year). Plague has occurred in people of all ages (infants up to age 96), though 50% of cases occur in people ages 12–45. It occurs in both men and women, though historically is slightly more common among men, probably because of increased outdoor activities that put them at higher risk.

Reported cases of human plague – United States, 1970–2022

Since the mid-20th century, plague in the United States has typically occurred in the rural West. Cases in the eastern United States are among people who traveled from the west or from laboratory exposure.



Map of reported human plague cases in the United States, 1970–2022.

