

# Appalachia cancer rates higher than average, but shrinking

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(HealthDay)—Cancer rates in Appalachia remain higher than in other

parts of the United States, but that gap is shrinking, a new study shows.

Reasons for the higher cancer rates in Appalachia—which extends from parts of New York to Mississippi—include greater tobacco use, poverty and less use of [health care services](#), according to the study.

The results were published Jan. 27 in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*.

The Appalachian region spans 420 counties in 13 states, and about 25 million people reside in it, said study author Reda Wilson, an epidemiologist at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This region is primarily made up of rural areas with persistent poverty levels that are at least 20 percent, which is higher than the national average," Wilson said in a journal news release.

Researchers analyzed 2004-11 cancer registry data and found that Appalachia continues to have higher cancer incidence rates than the rest of the country.

"But a promising finding is that we're seeing the gap narrow in the incidence rates between Appalachia and non-Appalachia since the 2007 analysis, with the exception of cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx, larynx, lung and bronchus and thyroid," Wilson said.

This study helps identify types of cancer in the Appalachian region that could be reduced through more screening and detection, Wilson said.

"Our study also emphasizes the importance of lifestyle changes needed to prevent and reduce cancer burden," she added.

**More information:** The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about

[cancer](#).

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