

Lung cancer survival continues to improve, but not for all

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Lung cancer survival rates in the United States continue to rise, but

certain racial groups are still hit hard by the disease, the American Lung Association reports.

Its fourth annual "State of Lung Cancer" report shows that the average five-year survival rate increased from 14.5% to nearly 24%, but it remains at 20% for people of color overall, and 18% for Black Americans.

"The report highlights important news—more people are surviving [lung cancer](#); however, it also underscores the fact that, sadly, [health disparities](#) persist for communities of color," said Harold Wimmer, national president and CEO for the [lung](#) association.

"Everyone deserves the opportunity to lead a full and [healthy life](#), so more must be done to address these health disparities," he added in a lung association news release.

The disparities were not confined to race, with wide variances seen among different states: The highest overall survival rate was in Connecticut (nearly 29%), while the lowest was in Alabama (just over 18%).

Nationwide, only 24% of cases are diagnosed at an early stage when the five-year survival rate is much higher (60%), while 46% of cases are not detected until a late stage when the survival rate is only 6%. Early diagnosis rates are best in Massachusetts (30%) and worst in Hawaii (19%).

Lung cancer screening with annual low-dose CT scans for those at high risk can reduce the lung cancer death rate by up to 20%, but only about 6% of those at high risk are screened. Massachusetts has the highest screening rate at about 18%, while California and Wyoming have the lowest, at 1%.

The report also found that just over 21% of all patients receive no treatment. While some reasons for non-treatment are unavoidable, no patients should go untreated due to: Lack of knowledge or a [health care provider](#); stigma; cost of treatment; or fatalism after diagnosis, the association said.

Another finding was that people of color have worse outcomes than [white people](#), including a lower likelihood of being diagnosed early and of having surgery, and being more likely to receive no treatment, according to the report.

While 40 states' Medicaid fee-for-service programs cover lung cancer screening, seven programs do not provide coverage, and three states did not have information available on their coverage policy.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on [lung cancer](#).

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