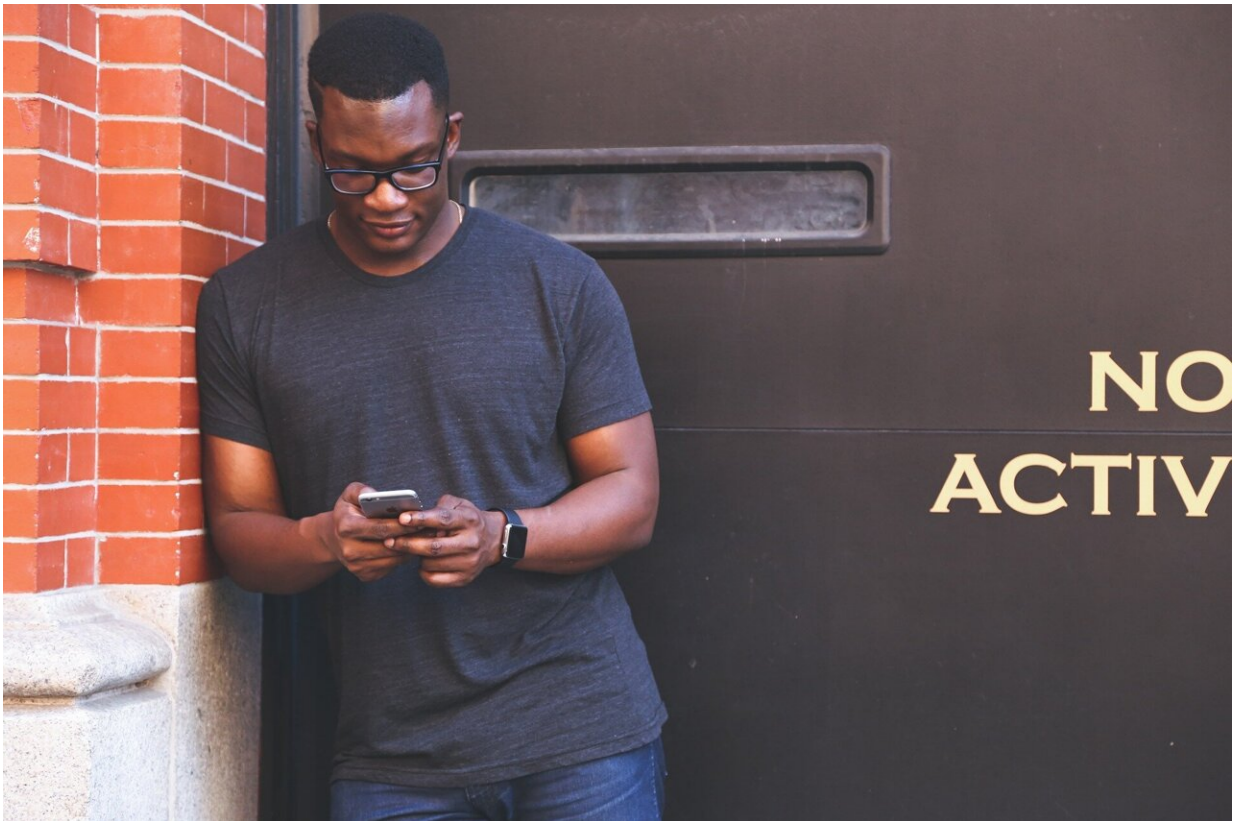


# Analysis shows Black Americans have highest cancer mortality rates in the US

February 1 2024

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Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, and for Black and African Americans, the numbers are even worse. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority

Health found Black/African Americans have the highest mortality rate of any racial and ethnic group for all cancers combined and for most major cancers.

Death rates for all major causes of death are higher for Black/African Americans than for non-Hispanic whites, contributing in part to a lower life expectancy for both Black/African American men and women.

- From 2015–2019, African American men were 1.2 times and 1.7 times, respectively, more likely to have new cases of colon and prostate cancer, as compared to non-Hispanic white men.
- Black/African American men are 1.8 times as likely to have stomach cancer, as compared to non-Hispanic white men and 2.5 times more likely to die from stomach cancer.
- Black/African American men have lower five-year cancer survival rates for most cancer sites, as compared to non-Hispanic white men.
- Black/African American men are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer, as compared to non-Hispanic white men. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, was recently diagnosed with [prostate cancer](#), putting a spotlight on the need for African American men to be screened regularly.
- Black/African American women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with stomach cancer, and they are 2.3 times more likely to die from [stomach cancer](#), as compared to non-Hispanic white women.
- From 2015–2019, Black/African American women were just as likely to have been diagnosed with breast cancer; however, they were almost 40% more likely to die from breast cancer, as compared to non-Hispanic white women.

## Breast cancer, one example of health disparities

For breast surgical oncologist at Hackensack Meridian Health's Bayshore Medical Center, Tesia McKenzie, M.D., the breast cancer statistics are puzzling but not surprising.

"Women of color not only get diagnosed with breast cancer later, but they are at higher risk of dying. There are multiple trials and studies going on to investigate why the difference exists," Dr. McKenzie said.

With an expertise in obstetrics and gynecology, Dr. McKenzie is working to better understand why the death rate of the one in eight women diagnosed with breast cancer is about 40% higher among black women and why the course of the disease is often much more aggressive in black women.

McKenzie is also educating patients on how they can reduce their risk and lead healthier lives so they do not become a statistic. She believes there must be a more personalized approach for [breast cancer](#) and other cancer screenings based on genetics and individual risk assessments.

"We need more women of color to sign up and participate in these landmark trials. They can start by asking their [health care providers](#) or even doing their own research online," McKenzie continued.

## **Lung cancer screening inequities**

When it comes to lung cancer, the American Lung Association found Black individuals with lung cancer were 15% less likely to be diagnosed early, 19% less likely to receive [surgical treatment](#), 11% more likely to not receive any treatment, and 16% less likely to survive five years compared to white individuals.

Dr. Lisa Carter-Bawa, a researcher and nurse who heads the Cancer Prevention Precision Control Institute (CPPCI) at the Hackensack

Meridian Center for Discovery and Innovation is extremely concerned about the especially low rates of lung cancer screening in the African American community.

Only 1.7% of screening-eligible African Americans have been screened for lung cancer. The reasons for low screening levels are multifactorial, including simply not knowing that there is a test that can find tumors at early stages prior to spread and increase survival secondary to more treatment options including full surgical removal.

Dr. Carter-Bawa is also concerned about the smoking stigma associated with lung cancer screenings. Her research highlights the importance of destigmatizing the language within the lung cancer screening process using the Lung Cancer Stigma-Communication Assessment Tool (LCS-CAT).

Breast and [lung cancer](#) are just two examples of the many areas Black Americans cancer prevention and care is lagging behind.

Provided by Hackensack Meridian Health

Citation: Analysis shows Black Americans have highest cancer mortality rates in the US (2024, February 1) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-02-analysis-black-americans-highest-cancer.html>

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