

Drivers of Cancer Disparities

Individuals who live in rural areas and are diagnosed with cancer face challenges in accessing cancer care.

June 8, 2026 By [Trent Straube](#)

“Cancer is a disease that affects everyone but not equally,” notes Lisa A. Lacasse, president of the [American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network](#), about the release of its news report, Cancer Disparities, which examines gaps in prevention, treatment and survivorship. Notably, communities disproportionately affected by cancer include Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people, folks who live in rural areas and people with disabilities. Key findings of the report include:

- Tobacco use is one of the main drivers of cancer-related health disparities, impacting numerous minority populations.
- The tobacco industry’s “aggressive marketing” intentionally targets these groups and fuels related disparities.
- Among smokers, 82% of Black people (more than other races/ethnicities) smoke menthols, which are harder to quit.
- Individuals who live in rural areas and are diagnosed with cancer face challenges in accessing cancer care and experience worse outcomes than those living in metropolitan areas.