

Good News—Mostly—About Cancer Survival

More Americans than ever are surviving cancer for five years or more.

March 9, 2026 By [Liz Highleyman](#)

More Americans than ever are surviving cancer for five years or more, according to a new report from the American Cancer Society (ACS). The five-year survival rate for all cancers combined reached 70% for people diagnosed between 2015 and 2021. Cancer mortality has fallen by 34% overall since its peak in the 1990s—meaning 4.8 million fewer deaths—mainly due to reduced smoking, earlier detection and improved treatment. Even for metastatic cancer, five-year survival has doubled from 17% to 35%. Survival gains are especially notable for more fatal cancers, such as liver cancer (from 7% to 22%) and lung cancer (from 15% to 28%), though lung cancer is still the top cause of cancer death.

“This stunning victory is largely the result of decades of cancer research that provided clinicians with the tools to treat the disease more effectively, turning many cancers from a death sentence into a chronic disease,” says lead author Rebecca Siegel, MPH.

Yet disparities persist. Black and Native American people, those with less education or lower income and those living in rural areas have higher mortality rates, according to a separate ACS analysis. “This report is further proof that access to timely, high-quality, affordable health care is critical to better health outcomes and reducing cancer disparities,” says Lisa Lacasse, president of the ACS Cancer Action Network.

A third ACS study found that while overall cancer mortality has dropped by 44% since 1990 for people under 50, colorectal cancer mortality has risen, and it is now the leading cause of death in this age group. Although breast cancer mortality has fallen, it remains the top cause of cancer death for younger women. For both sexes combined, lung cancer dropped from No. 1 to No. 4.