

Hepatitis C in the African American Community

African Americans are disproportionately affected by hepatitis C.

- African Americans comprise about 11 percent of the U.S. population, but account for 25 percent of all hepatitis C cases.¹
- Between 2011 and 2015, the rate of hepatitis C-related deaths for African Americans was roughly double that for whites.²
- From 1990 to 2014, the liver cancer death rate increased by 57 percent for African Americans.³
- In 2014, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis were among the top 10 leading causes of death among African Americans 45 to 64 years of age.⁴

African Americans face discriminatory barriers to care and treatment for hepatitis C.

- African Americans are more likely to be deemed ineligible for lifesaving hepatitis C treatment than other racial groups, even when controlling for other medical factors.⁵
- Compared to other racial groups, African Americans are less likely to be tested for hepatitis C and less likely to be linked to care after a diagnosis.⁶

Although African Americans have experienced larger gains in health coverage than whites under the Affordable Care Act, significant racial disparities in access to coverage remain.

- African Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites to be uninsured.⁷
- Nearly half of uninsured nonelderly African Americans are eligible for coverage under the Medicaid expansion.⁸
- Uninsured nonelderly African Americans are twice as likely as uninsured whites to not qualify for coverage under Medicaid because their state did not expand Medicaid.⁹

African Americans are far more likely than whites to be incarcerated in jails and prisons, where hepatitis C is especially widespread.

- In 2014, about one third of the incarcerated population was African American.¹⁰
- African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites.¹¹
- In 2014, approximately 3 percent of *all* African American men were in prison with a sentence of at least one year.¹²
- Approximately one in three individuals in U.S. jails and prisons have hepatitis C.¹³
- In state prisons, which incarcerate about 90 percent of all prisoners in the U.S., fewer than 1 percent of prisoners with hepatitis C are receiving treatment.¹⁴

¹ Hepatitis C Disparities among African Americans, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (Feb. 2017), <https://www.hhs.gov/hepatitis/blog/2017/02/27/hepatitis-c-disparities-among-african-americans.html>.

² Surveillance for Viral Hepatitis – United States, 2015, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, Table 4.5, <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2015surveillance/index.htm>.

³ Islami, et al. Disparities in liver cancer occurrence in the United States by race/ethnicity and state. CA CANCER J CLIN 2017;67:273–289 at 275.

⁴ Hepatitis C Disparities among African Americans, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (Feb. 2017), <https://www.hhs.gov/hepatitis/blog/2017/02/27/hepatitis-c-disparities-among-african-americans.html>.

⁵ Sims, et al. Racial Disparities in Hepatitis C Treatment Eligibility. ANNALS OF HEPATOLOGY 2017;16:530-537.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Health Coverage by Race and Ethnicity: Examining Changes Under the ACA and the Remaining Uninsured, HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2016), <http://www.kff.org/report-section/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity-examining-changes-under-the-aca-and-the-remaining-uninsured-issue-brief/>.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, NAACP (2017), <http://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>.

¹¹ Id.

¹² Bailey, et al. Structural racism and health inequities in the USA: evidence and interventions. THE LANCET 2017;389:1453-1463.

¹³ Hepatitis C and Incarceration, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (Oct. 2013), <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCIncarcerationFactSheet.pdf>.

¹⁴ Beckman, et al. New Hepatitis C Drugs Are Very Costly And Unavailable To Many State Prisoners. HEALTH AFF 2016;35:893-1901.

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