To Drive a Deeper Understanding of Cancer Disparities, American Cancer Society Launches Largest U.S. Population Study of Black Women

With a goal of enrolling over 100,000 Black women, the groundbreaking VOICES of Black Women® study will focus on lived experiences to improve health outcomes for the next generation

Editor's Note: Please see the latest updates to the VOICES initiative at pressroom.cancer.org/voices-2026.

ATLANTA, May 7, 2024 - Today, the American Cancer Society (ACS) is proud to announce the launch of the VOICES of Black Women® study, the largest behavioral and environmental focused population study of cancer risk and outcomes in Black women in the United States. Designed to better understand the multi-level drivers of cancer incidence, mortality and resilience within this demographic, the long-term study will gather valuable data from Black women between the ages of 25 and 55 from diverse backgrounds and income levels who have not been diagnosed with cancer. The organization aims to enroll over 100,000 Black women across 20 states and D.C. where, according to the U.S. Census, more than 90 percent of Black women in the U.S. reside.

A global leader in cancer research, the American Cancer Society has a 70-year history of funding and conducting some of the world's largest and most impactful population cohort studies to understand how cancer develops in populations, identify cancer risk factors, and improve survivorship and outcomes after diagnosis. Through these studies, over 2.5 million research participants have contributed to landmark discoveries in cancer science like the linkage of cigarette smoking to lung cancer, obesity to the risk of early death, and red and processed meat intake to higher risk of colon cancer. These and other discoveries have contributed to a 33 percent age adjusted reduction in cancer mortality rates since rates peaked in 1991. But despite these significant strides in cancer research, Black women continue to have the highest death rate and the shortest survival of any racial or ethnic group in the U.S. for most cancers. Led by American Cancer Society researchers, Dr. Alpa Patel and Dr. Lauren McCullough, the VOICES of Black Women® study will partner with communities of Black women and cross-disciplinary experts in Black women's health to listen and better understand the unique, diverse lived experiences that may affect the risk of developing or dying from cancer. Results will be used to improve the overall health of Black women for generations to come.

"VOICES of Black Women® represents a crucial step toward achieving health equity in a population that is long overdue," said Patel, co-principal investigator of the study and senior vice president of population science at the American Cancer Society. "The data we've uncovered through previous population studies has been critical in reducing the unacceptably high burden of cancer, but that reduction has sadly not been equal. By centering Black women's voices and experiences, we can dig deeper in uncovering the unique challenges and barriers contributing to cancer disparities and develop tailored interventions to mitigate them."

Recruitment for the study began in October 2023 with a pilot launch in Atlanta, GA and Hampton Roads, VA. The national launch expands enrollment to Alabama, California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Eligible participants must identify as Black, be assigned female at birth or self-identify as women, not have a history of cancer (except basal or squamous skin cancer), and be between the ages of 25 and 55. Enrolled participants will provide informed consent and, over the span of 30 years, answer behavioral, environmental, and lived experience questions through periodic short surveys delivered via a secure online portal. No medication, clinical testing, treatment, or lifestyle changes are part of the study.

The American Cancer Society believes everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to prevent, find, treat and survive cancer. Acting on this belief and fulfilling the organization's vision of ending cancer as we know it for everyone requires focus on eliminating deeply rooted barriers that have caused long-standing inequities in cancer outcomes. The VOICES of Black Women® study represents a significant stride towards achieving this goal and underscores the organization's unwavering commitment to health equity and social justice.

For more information about the VOICES of Black Women® study and how to participate, please visit voices.cancer.org.

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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