

Key Terms Related to Cancer Health Disparities

This report includes topics and terms that have defined descriptions, applicability, and/or purpose in the cancer health disparities literature. Below is a brief list of key terms and their definitions to provide context and clarity to the topics discussed throughout this report.



Cancer Health Disparities

Adverse differences in cancer measures such as number of new cases, number of deaths, cancer-related health complications, survivorship and quality of life after cancer treatment, screening rates, and stage at diagnosis between certain population groups. These population groups may be characterized by race, ethnicity, disability, gender and sexual identity, geographic location, income, education, and other characteristics.



Discrimination

Actions based on conscious or unconscious prejudice that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities. Structural and institutional factors can contribute to discriminatory behaviors including being implicitly biased against other social characteristics such as class, age, immigration status, gender identity, and sexual orientation.



Diversity

The full range of human similarities and differences in group affiliation including gender, race and ethnicity, social class, role within an organization, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, and other group identities.



Health Equity

Equity is when all people are given the chance to live as healthy a life as possible regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, education, job, religion, language, where they live, or other factors.



Intersectionality

Coined in 1989 by legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term intersectionality traces its roots in Black feminist thought and encompasses the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the lived experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.



Persistent Poverty Areas

A persistent poverty county is defined as one in which 20 percent or more of its population has lived in poverty over the past four-decade period.



Rural and Urban Areas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture categorizes rural and urban areas using the rural-urban commuting area codes, which classify U.S. census tracts—small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or statistically equivalent entity—using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting.



Social Determinants of Health

The social, economic, and physical conditions in the places where people are born and where they live, learn, work, play, and get older that can affect their health, well-being, and quality of life. Social determinants of health include factors such as education level; income; employment; housing; transportation; and access to healthy food, clean air and water, and health care services.



Socioeconomic Status

A way of describing individuals or neighborhoods based on their education, income, housing, and type of job, among other indicators.



Structural Racism

A system of organizational and institutional policies created over time that support a continued unfair advantage for some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on their race or ethnic group. Structural racism comes from deep patterns of social, economic, and cultural differences that have developed over time between different groups of people. It affects the physical, social, and economic conditions of where people live, learn, work, and play.