



# Enhancing Community-Clinical Linkages: Breast Cancer and Transportation Barriers

Breast cancer is common in the United States. One out of every eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetimes, and breast cancer accounts for one in every three new cases of cancer in women.<sup>1</sup> Breast cancer is also increasingly affecting younger women. New cases have increased steadily among women aged 45 years and younger over the past 20 years.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite the frequent occurrence of breast cancer, there are multi-level barriers that prevent people from receiving timely cancer screenings and care.

This is especially true for people with low incomes. Non-medical factors that influence health (also known as social determinants of health), such as food insecurity, health insurance status, or education, commonly affect populations with low incomes.

**In particular, transportation, or more precisely, *unreliable* transportation, is a key non-medical factor in low-income populations that can lead to later diagnoses; missed and delayed medical appointments, treatments, and follow-up; and ultimately worse clinical outcomes.** Specifically:<sup>3</sup>

- Cancer treatment usually requires many appointments over a long period of time, and travel expenses due to driving, public transportation or ride shares, and parking can quickly add up.
- People undergoing cancer treatment often feel too sick to drive themselves to appointments or ride public transportation.
- Public transportation can put people at an increased risk of infection, especially for those with weakened immune systems, such as people undergoing cancer treatment.
- People in rural, Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs), or Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) may have to travel long distances for care, sometimes requiring missed work or overnight travel for treatment.

Transportation barriers affect cancer diagnosis and care:

- Missed appointments can delay important care or screenings.<sup>4</sup> Early breast cancer screening (mammography) helps improve breast cancer outcomes, but unreliable transportation can prevent or delay screenings and follow-up care.
- Cancer survivors with transportation barriers are more likely to visit the emergency room and die of any cause than those who do not have transportation barriers.<sup>5</sup>
- Without a car, people diagnosed with cancer may not be able to fill prescriptions or go to the grocery store.

## Healthy People 2030 Objectives

Addressing transportation barriers for women before, during, and after breast cancer will help meet several [Healthy People 2030 Objectives](#), including increasing the proportion of

- People with a usual source of care,
- Females who get screened for breast cancer, and
- Cancer survivors who are living 5 years or longer after diagnosis.



**Transportation barriers overlap with other social and health factors. In one study of more than 11,000 cancer survivors, the following factors were associated with transportation barriers:<sup>6</sup>**

**Employment instability,**

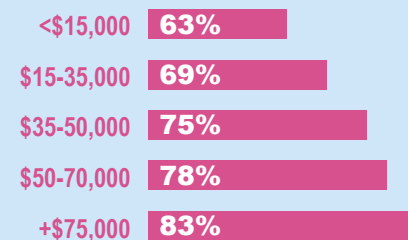
**Public Health Insurance or Uninsured** (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program),

**Income at or near the federal poverty line** (see graph below),

**Physical limitations** (e.g., difficulty walking, standing), and

**Multiple comorbidities**, such as cardiovascular disease (CVD) and diabetes.

## Breast Cancer Screening Rates Among Women by Annual Household Income, 2022<sup>7</sup>



## References

1. Key Statistics for Breast Cancer. American Cancer Society. Revised May 5, 2025. Accessed October 17, 2025. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/about/how-common-is-breast-cancer.html>
2. Breast Cancer Among Women Younger Than 45. CDC. Published August 15, 2025. Accessed October 17, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/united-states-cancer-statistics/publications/breast-cancer-among-young-women.html>
3. Chaiyachati K, Gall JS, Graboyes E, et al. Transportation Needs Among Patients with Cancer: A Virtual Webinar. September 21, 2021. Accessed October 17, 2025. Videocast available at: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/event/09-21-2021/transportation-needs-among-patients-with-cancer-a-virtual-webinar>
4. Graboyes K, Chaiyachati KH, Gall JS, et al. Addressing Transportation Insecurity Among Patients with Cancer. JNCI. 2022;114(12):1593-1600. doi: 10.1093/jnci/djac134
5. Jiang C, Yabroff KR, Deng L, et al. Transportation Barriers, Emergency Room Use, and Mortality Risk Among US Adults by Cancer History. JNCI. 2023; 115(7):815-821. doi: 10.1093/jnci/djad050
6. Jiang C, Yabroff KR, Deng L. Self-reported Transportation Barriers to Health Care Among US Cancer Survivors. 2022; 8(5): 775-778. doi: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2022.0143
7. Coverage of Breast Cancer Screening and Prevention Services. KFF. Published April 24, 2025. Accessed October 17, 2025. <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/coverage-of-breast-cancer-screening-and-prevention-services/>

## How Can States, Counties, and Communities Support Transportation During Cancer Treatment?

Community clinical linkages (CCLs)—or connections between community, public health, and healthcare organizations—can play a crucial role in identifying and addressing transportation barriers.

| Entity                                                                       | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| State government and local county/parish programs                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate free transportation support services for breast cancer survivors into emergency preparedness planning and recovery efforts.</li> <li>• Explore partnership and patient navigation opportunities involving mobile mammography services and follow-up care with transportation providers to offer vouchers.</li> <li>• Establish CCLs to link mobile mammography services to local Federally Qualified Health Centers or Rural Health Clinics to establish routine medical care for low-income individuals with pre-existing conditions, such as CVD and type 2 diabetes, who are receiving mammograms.</li> <li>• Collaborate with CDC's <a href="#">WISEWOMAN</a> program to address CVD and social and economic factors in women who participate in the <a href="#">National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program</a>.</li> <li>• Leverage the Million Hearts "<a href="#">Live to the Beat</a>" Campaign's <a href="#">Community Ambassador Network</a> to reduce CVD among people at high risk or diagnosed with breast cancer.</li> </ul> |
| Healthcare practices, clinics, centers, and organizations                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create or join a rideshare program to provide transportation to and from medical appointments (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Kaizen Health, SafeRide Health, Ride Health).</li> <li>• Incorporate free transportation support services into community benefit programs and community health improvement programs.</li> <li>• Employ patient navigators and community health workers to identify and resolve non-medical factors (e.g., transportation barriers) affecting medical appointments and follow-up among patients.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Multisector organizations (e.g., nonprofit, community-based, or faith-based) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build or strengthen programs to provide transportation to and from medical appointments. Partnerships through rideshare organizations (e.g., Uber, Lyft) or non-profits (e.g., Meals on Wheels) can help establish programs.</li> <li>• Join the Million Hearts "<a href="#">Live to the Beat</a>" Campaign's <a href="#">Community Ambassador Network</a> to address CVD in local communities.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## Resources

| Organization                                             | Resource                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Purpose                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| American Academy of Family Physicians                    | <a href="#">Financial Assistance</a>                                                                                                                                                                                       | Neighborhood Navigator that connects people with local financial assistance                                         |
| American Academy of Professional Coders                  | <a href="#">Uber Helps Remove SDOH Barriers for Patients</a>                                                                                                                                                               | Article on Uber's outreach efforts to remove barriers to health                                                     |
| American Hospital Association                            | <a href="#">Transportation and the Role of Hospitals</a>                                                                                                                                                                   | Report on the role hospitals play in addressing transportation barriers                                             |
| American Cancer Society                                  | <a href="#">Road to Recovery</a>                                                                                                                                                                                           | Program that provides free rides to cancer treatments                                                               |
|                                                          | <a href="#">Hope Lodge</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Program with temporary housing for people traveling during cancer treatment                                         |
| CancerCare                                               | <a href="#">Financial and Co-Pay Assistance</a>                                                                                                                                                                            | Financial resources for people with cancer                                                                          |
| CDC                                                      | <a href="#">Breast Cancer Among Women Younger Than 45</a>                                                                                                                                                                  | Information on breast cancer among women younger than 45                                                            |
|                                                          | <a href="#">National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program</a>                                                                                                                                                | Cancer screening for underinsured and uninsured women with low incomes                                              |
| Georgia Core                                             | <a href="#">Financial Assistance Resources</a>                                                                                                                                                                             | List of financial assistance resources for people with cancer                                                       |
| Living Beyond Breast Cancer                              | <a href="#">Breast Cancer Helpline</a>                                                                                                                                                                                     | Helpline that connects people with breast cancer with resources                                                     |
| Lyft Healthcare                                          | <a href="#">Lyft Healthcare</a>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Partnership between Lyft and healthcare organizations that provides transportation to and from medical appointments |
|                                                          | <a href="#">Lyft's Impact on Social Drivers of Health</a>                                                                                                                                                                  | Article on the outcomes of Lyft's program to address social factors that affect health                              |
| National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine | <a href="#">Transportation Needs Among Patients with Cancer: A Virtual Webinar</a>                                                                                                                                         | Webinar on transportation barriers to cancer treatment and support programs                                         |
| National Breast Cancer Foundation                        | <a href="#">Patient Relief Program</a>                                                                                                                                                                                     | Financial support fund for women with breast cancer, including for transportation                                   |
| Mercy Medical Angels                                     | <a href="#">Travel Assistance</a>                                                                                                                                                                                          | Air and ground travel for people with serious medical conditions                                                    |
| Patient Advocate Foundation                              | <a href="#">Breast Cancer Resource Directory</a>                                                                                                                                                                           | Directory of financial assistance resources for people with breast cancer                                           |
| SMHN                                                     | <a href="#">Pathways to Health Equity: Expanding Community-Clinical Linkages to Improve Health Outcomes Among Low-Income Populations Nationwide Webinar Series</a>                                                         | Webinar series on enhancing CCLs to address social factors among people with low incomes                            |
|                                                          | <a href="#">How Screening Saves Lives: Breast Cancer and Lung Cancer Screening in Low Socioeconomic Status Populations</a>                                                                                                 | Fact sheet on how pairing breast and lung cancer screenings can improve screening rates                             |
|                                                          | <a href="#">Enhancing Emergency Preparedness Approaches for Low-Income Populations Along the Cancer Continuum: Free Cancer Support Services Available (Year-Round) for Your State, Patients, Employees and Communities</a> | Webinar series on emergency preparedness for people diagnosed with cancer                                           |
| Uber Health                                              | <a href="#">Non-Emergency Medical Transportation</a>                                                                                                                                                                       | Program that provides non-emergency medical transportation                                                          |
|                                                          | <a href="#">Pink Ribbon Girls Clears the Road to Recovery with Uber Health</a>                                                                                                                                             | Article on an Uber partnership with Pink Ribbon Girls to help women reach medical appointments                      |



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Consortium of National Networks  
SelfMade Health Network (CDC National Disparity Network)

<https://selfmadehealth.org/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/selfmadehealthnetwork/>



<https://www.facebook.com/SelfMadeHealthNetwork/>