



In the United States, Causes of Chronic Liver Disease Vary Widely by Ethnicity

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Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is by far the most common cause of chronic liver disease in the United States, but recent findings published in the journal *Hepatology* suggest that when broken down by ethnicity, the cause of liver damage among people in this country varies widely, [Eureka Alert reports](#).

According to the study findings, chronic liver disease (CLD) affects an estimated 3.9 percent of African Americans and Native Hawaiians, 4.1 percent of whites, 6.7 percent of Latinos and 6.9 percent of Japanese in the United States today. As expected, NAFLD was the most common cause of liver damage in these groups combined, making up 52 percent of overall cases, followed by alcoholic liver disease (ALD), which made up 21 percent of cirrhosis cases in the study.

But when examining these CLD rates according to ethnic groups, researchers saw some interesting patterns emerge. According to study authors, NAFLD remained the most common cause of cirrhosis among Japanese Americans, Native Americans and Latinos, representing 32 percent of cases. But among white people, alcoholic liver disease reigned supreme, causing 38.2 percent of overall cirrhosis cases. Among African Americans, hepatitis C virus (HCV) was the primary driver of CLD, contributing to 29.8 percent of cirrhosis cases in this group.

Study authors noted that this is the first study of its kind to date to include data on Native Hawaiians and Japanese Americans. The paper addresses a major gap in knowledge for these understudied populations and drives home the point that liver disease affects various races in the United States far differently than previously thought.

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