The 2021 Lung Health Barometer is a new, nationally representative survey conducted by the American Lung Association that examined the awareness, attitudes and beliefs of 4,000 Americans about lung health and lung cancer.

The American Lung Association’s LUNG FORCE unites our nation to stand together for lung health and against lung cancer. We remain steadfast in our mission of saving lives by improving lung health through education, advocacy, and research, and our efforts are paying off: more people are surviving lung cancer than ever before.

- Although lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths among Americans, there has been a dramatic 33% improvement in the five-year survival rate over the past 10 years.
- This is due to both the lifesaving potential of lung cancer screening and support of advancements in research, which hold the promise for better treatment options.

Greater awareness of lung cancer is key to marshaling research funding, encouraging lung cancer screening, and reducing stigma around this disease.

Stigma Harms Patient Outcomes
Awareness of the fact that lung cancer is the leading cancer killer in the U.S. is low, and unfortunately the disease often lacks the resources, support and public empathy committed to conquering other diseases. This gap is likely attributable to the strong, pervasive stigma associated with lung cancer – a stigma that is harmful to the health and lives of patients who are already facing a tough diagnosis.

But there’s hope. More people are surviving lung cancer than ever before. Despite this progress, this national survey indicates there’s more work to be done in raising awareness and understanding of lung cancer.
Screening Offers Potential to Save Lives

Early detection and treatment of lung cancer translate to higher survival rates. However, only 22% of lung cancer cases are diagnosed early, when the disease is most treatable. Early detection, by low-dose CT screening, can decrease lung cancer mortality by up to 20% among the high-risk population.

Approximately 14.2 million Americans qualify as high risk for lung cancer and are recommended to be screened. In March of 2021, the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force updated the lung cancer screening eligibility guidelines, lowering the age for eligibility to 50 (from 55) and the pack years smoked to 20 (from 30). These new guidelines are estimated to double the number of women and Black Americans eligible for screening.

Despite this tremendous potential to save lives, only about 5% of those eligible have been screened. Raising awareness about this relatively new cancer screening technique is critical to saving lives.

The Lung Association’s “Saved By The Scan” campaign, in partnership with the Ad Council, has helped over 635,000 Americans learn if they are at high risk for lung cancer through a simple eligibility quiz. 26% of quiz respondents were found to be eligible for lung cancer screening.

Increased Research Funding Fuels New Breakthroughs

Research provides hope and saves lives. This is especially true when it comes to lung cancer research. Lung cancer research can help develop better treatments, increasing the survival and quality of life for patients. Research can provide a better and longer future for those diagnosed with lung cancer and can also ultimately increase the number of survivors.

Since 2016, more than 40 new therapies were approved by the FDA to treat lung cancer – giving life and hope to those with lung cancer.

Through LUNG FORCE, the American Lung Association has funded over $22M in lung cancer research and helped increase the National Institutes of Health (NIH) lung cancer research funding by over 100% through our education, advocacy and research efforts.