



2026 Lung Health Barometer Media Summary

70% of survey respondents agreed they felt hopeful that the outcomes for those impacted by lung cancer improved over the past 10 years.



Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. with an estimated 229,410 new cases this year alone. The national conversation around the disease, nonetheless, is evolving. Despite enduring misconceptions, lung cancer can affect anyone, regardless of age, background or smoking history, and it claims nearly 629 lives each day.¹

The American Lung Association's 2026 Lung Health Barometer is a biannual national survey now in its eighth edition. This year, it reveals a troubling gap between the impact of lung cancer and public awareness of lung cancer screening availability. Among 4,000 individuals surveyed just 28% recognized lung cancer as the nation's leading cause of cancer death, and only 33% were aware of the lifesaving screening available to people who are eligible.

Growing efforts to improve awareness of what causes lung cancer, combat stigma and promote screening have begun to change perceptions of the disease. Even so, many individuals are unaware of key facts about lung cancer and the opportunities for early detection. Those foundational efforts are critical, but the next phase must focus on empowering people to take meaningful action—from evaluating their personal risk and screening eligibility to then completing screening as recommended, following up on results and accessing trusted information.

Turning Awareness into Action

While awareness and understanding gaps persist, the findings point to an important shift: awareness alone is not enough—action is what saves lives. This evolution reflects the impact of sustained efforts like the American Lung Association's Lung Cancer Screening Initiatives, which feature support and patient assistance through Lung Health Navigators, as well as the LUNG FORCE initiative's fundraising events and advocacy efforts, and the Saved By The Scan campaign. These programs are helping move the conversation beyond knowledge-building toward measurable outcomes and positive impact.

Yet too many Americans remain disconnected from the actions that could help save lives. The survey found that 76% of adults have not discussed their lung cancer risk with a healthcare provider and only 36% expressed concern about developing the disease—shedding light on the continued gap between lung cancer burden and actionable steps to take for prevention and early detection.

Defeating lung cancer will require a coordinated, multi-pronged approach that mobilizes healthcare providers, policymakers, advocates and public health leaders to address barriers, expand screening access and accelerate progress.

Only 14% of respondents were aware that the lung cancer survival rate increased by over 50% in the past ten years.





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

Screening Saves Lives

Early detection is one of the most effective ways to improve lung cancer outcomes. When found early, lung cancer is far more treatable; however, screening rates among eligible individuals are far too low. Nationally, only 25% of cases are diagnosed at an early stage, when the five-year survival rate climbs to 65%.²

Approximately 12.9 million Americans are considered at high risk for lung cancer and are recommended for screening.³ In 2021, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force expanded screening eligibility by lowering the recommended screening age from 55 to 50 and reducing the smoking history threshold from smoking one pack a day for 30 years to 20—changes that significantly increased access, particularly for women and Black individuals. Even with these important advances, only 24.5% of eligible individuals are currently being screened, including 24.8% of women and 24.0% of Black individuals.⁴

Through the Lung Association's Saved By The Scan campaign, in collaboration with the Ad Council, more than 1.6 million people have already used a simple online quiz to better understand their lung cancer screening eligibility, helping turn knowledge into potentially lifesaving next steps. Likewise, the grant-funded Lung Cancer Screening Initiatives increase access to low-dose CT (LDCT) screenings through education, barrier reduction and personalized Lung Health Navigator support, resulting in more than 36,000 LDCT referrals since 2022, an 80% screening completion rate and 67% of diagnosed participants being identified at an early stage.

Still A Lot of Work to Do

Research is a driving force behind progress in lung cancer with sustained investment contributing to the development of 75 new therapies since 2016. Through the American Lung Association Research Institute, the organization has helped advance this momentum, investing more than \$35 million in research that is accelerating scientific discovery and expanding hope for patients and families.



Changing the trajectory of lung cancer requires more than visibility; it requires momentum. Continued investment in public education, stigma reduction, screening access and research will be essential to turning awareness into earlier diagnoses, better treatment outcomes and, ultimately, more lives saved.

For more information, please visit: [Lung.org/barometer](https://lung.org/barometer)

¹ Siegel RL, Kratzer TB, Wagle NS, Sung H, Jemal A. Cancer Statistics, 2026. CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. 2026;1-34.

² U.S. National Institutes of Health. National Cancer Institute: SEER*Explorer, 2022.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2022. Analysis by the American Lung Association Epidemiology and Statistics Unit using SPSS software.

⁴ Burus T, McAfee CR, Knight JR, Mullett TW, Hull PC. Lung Cancer Screening Prevalence and Changes in 2024. JAMA Internal Medicine, 2026: E1-E3.