



# 2021 Lung Health Barometer Media Summary

## Lung Cancer is the Leading Cancer Killer



Although there has been a dramatic 33% improvement in the lung cancer survival rate over the past decade,<sup>1</sup> **more work needs to be done.**

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S., and despite its undeniable impact on our nation, the disease often remains in the shadows. It is estimated that over 235,000 Americans will be diagnosed this year with lung cancer. While there are many misconceptions about lung cancer, the fact is that anyone can get it and no one deserves it. Every day, lung cancer takes the lives more than 382 of our friends, neighbors and loved ones.

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.

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.

## Driving More Awareness



**29%** of Americans know that lung cancer is the leading cancer killer of women and men, an **8% increase** from the 2020 Lung Health Barometer.



According to the Ad Council, only 30% of high-risk current or former smokers report taking to their doctor about lung cancer screening.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the survey revealed that **69% of adults have not spoken with their doctor about their risk for lung cancer and only 44% are concerned they might get the disease.**

Too few adults understand that lung cancer is among the cancers most likely to affect women (10%) and men (35%).

A strategic imperative of the American Lung Association is to defeat lung cancer, and to do so, we need an approach that engages a variety of tactics and stakeholders to address the disease, its risk factors, public policy efforts and public health protections, awareness of lung cancer screening and more.

## 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.



**New lung cancer screening guidelines!  
Should you be screened?**

- Between 50 and 80 years old
- Have a 20 pack-year smoking history
- Current smoker or quit within the last 15 years

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 **\$17M 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.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute: SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2018 <sup>2</sup> Ad Council, Online Continuous Tracking Survey, 6/2017-4/2021