GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

Hong Kong briefing:
Symptom awareness, attitudes to lung cancer and views on screening
Findings from a global survey

Overview

The Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC) is a partnership of 44 patient organisations across 32 nations / territories, working to improve lung cancer awareness, reduce stigma and improve outcomes.

The GLCC Patient Charter asserts that all people with lung cancer have the right to dignity, respect, quality care, informed decision making, privacy and freedom from blame and stigma.

Public perceptions can significantly affect these rights. Stigma and low symptom awareness may delay help-seeking and diagnosis, making it important to understand attitudes towards lung cancer.

In 2026, the GLCC conducted a global study to explore public attitudes to lung cancer, awareness of symptoms and views on screening. The research builds on studies undertaken in 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2023. Hong Kong participated in the survey for the first time in 2026 and therefore comparisons with previous years are not available.

The GLCC is calling on governments and health systems across the world to:

- Increase recognition of lung cancer symptoms through targeted public awareness campaigns
- Challenge stigma and misconceptions through evidence-based awareness initiatives
- Implement national lung cancer screening programmes to support earlier detection and treatment
- Ensure equitable access to screening, diagnosis and care for all people affected by lung cancer

This briefing sets out the key findings from Hong Kong in 2026 and how they compare with other countries included in the survey. The results highlight three key themes:

- **Awareness of lung cancer symptoms** is relatively high, with Hong Kong ranking among the countries with the strongest levels of symptom recognition and less than a quarter of respondents unable to identify any symptoms.
- **Levels of stigma** towards people with lung cancer remain concerning, with almost half of respondents reporting that they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer.
- **Public support for lung cancer screening** is strong, despite the absence of a population-wide national screening programme, highlighting support for efforts to improve earlier diagnosis.

Key findings: Hong Kong

Symptom recognition

- More than **two in ten** of people (**23.0%**) responding to the survey said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer.
- Men were more likely to report not knowing any symptoms compared to women (**25% vs. 21.3%**)
- People **aged 18-24** were most likely to report not knowing any symptoms (**31.5%**), compared with **20.0%** of those **aged 25-34**.
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were less likely to report not knowing any symptoms than people who have never smoked (**19.8% vs. 25.0%**).

Attitudes towards lung cancer

- Almost **half** of people (**45.6%**) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, compared with **39.2% globally**.
- Men were more likely than women to report having less sympathy (**50.4% vs. 41.4%**).
- People **aged 18-24** were most likely to report having less sympathy (**49.4%**), while those **aged 55 and over** were least likely to do so (**39.0%**).
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were more likely than people who have never smoked to report having less sympathy (**53.7% vs. 40.0%**).

Views on lung cancer screening

- More than **eight in ten** people (**80.8%**) agreed there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early.
- Support was high among both women and men (**81.2% vs. 80.4%**).
- Support was highest among people **aged 18-24** (**85.4%**) and lowest among those aged **45-54** (**73.5%**).
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were more supportive of screening than those who have never smoked (**84.4% vs. 78.4%**).

Methodology

The GLCC commissioned the market research agency Censuswide to undertake an online survey of adults across 32 countries between 17 March 2026 – 24 March 2026. The survey samples included 1,000 adults from Hong Kong and data was weighted using age, gender and region to produce a representative sample in each country. Respondents were asked the following questions:

- Q1. There are many warning signs and symptoms of lung cancer. Please list as many symptoms of lung cancer as you can think of [a tick box was provided for 'Don't know'].
- Q2. Lung cancer is mainly caused by smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer.
- Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: There should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early.

Further analysis

Symptom recognition

Raising awareness of lung cancer symptoms is important, as recognising potential symptoms and seeking medical advice can support earlier diagnosis and better outcomes.

In Hong Kong, 23.0% of respondents said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer. This is below the 2026 global average and places Hong Kong among the countries with comparatively high levels of symptom awareness in the survey. Only South Africa and Brazil recorded lower proportions of respondents unable to identify any symptoms.

Among respondents who could identify symptoms, the most commonly recognised were persistent cough, coughing up blood or blood in sputum, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, and chest pain. Respondents also identified weight loss, fatigue and wheezing.

Other potential symptoms were less commonly recognised, including hoarseness or changes to the voice, loss of appetite, recurrent respiratory infections such as pneumonia or bronchitis, shoulder or

back pain, and difficulty swallowing. The findings suggest that awareness in Hong Kong is concentrated around a number of commonly recognised symptoms, while awareness of the broader range of potential lung cancer symptoms remains more limited.

Chart 1. Percentage of respondents who indicated they did not know any symptoms, by country

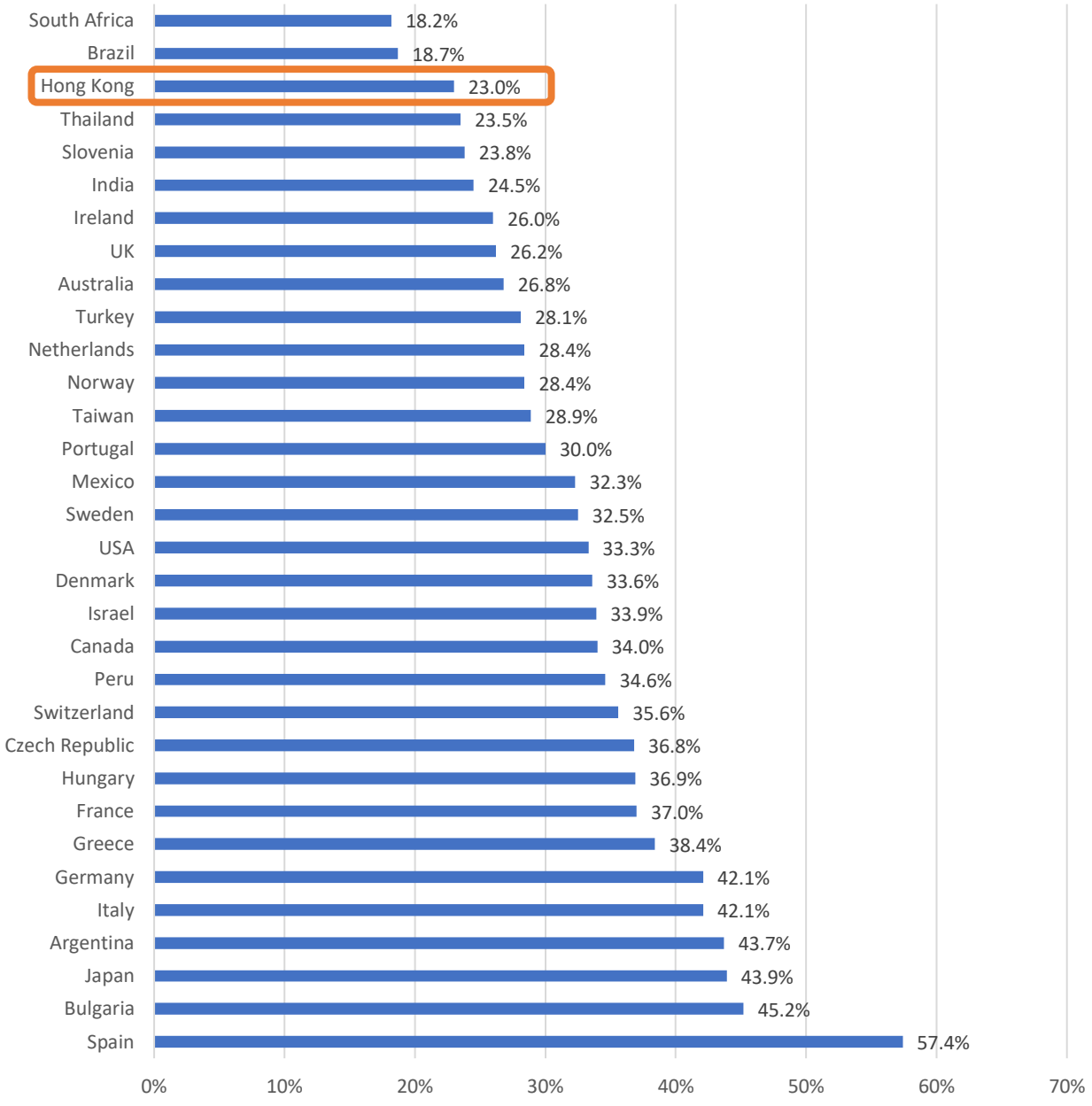


Chart 2. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who indicated they did not know any symptoms, by age

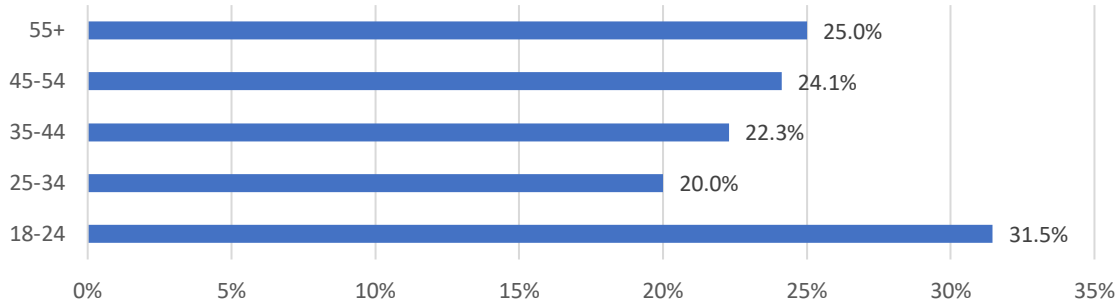
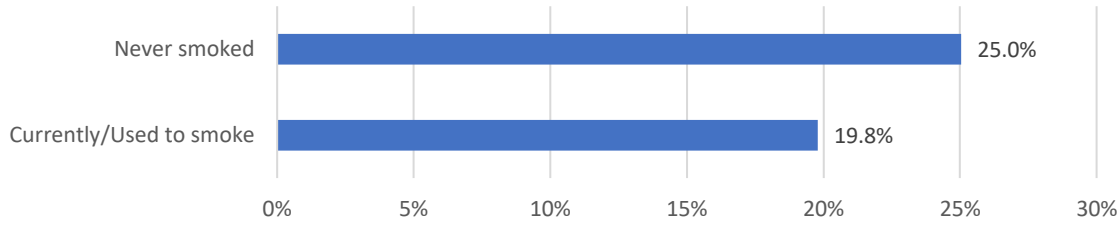


Chart 3. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who indicated they did not know any symptoms of smoking, by status



Attitudes towards lung cancer

Around 60-70% of lung cancer cases are linked to smoking, which can contribute to stigma and blame associated with the disease.[1] This is concerning because lung cancer can affect people regardless of smoking history, while stigma and misconceptions may discourage some individuals from seeking medical advice when symptoms first appear. The GLCC believes that everyone living with lung cancer deserves access to high-quality treatment and care, regardless of the cause of their cancer.

In Hong Kong, 45.6% of respondents reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer. This is above the 2026 global average of 39.2%, placing Hong Kong among the countries with higher levels of reported stigma in the survey. These findings highlight the importance of continued efforts to improve understanding of lung cancer and challenge blame and stigma associated with the disease.

[1] World Health Organization (2026) *Lung cancer*. Available at: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/lung-cancer (Accessed: 11 August 2026)

Chart 4. Percentage of respondents who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by country

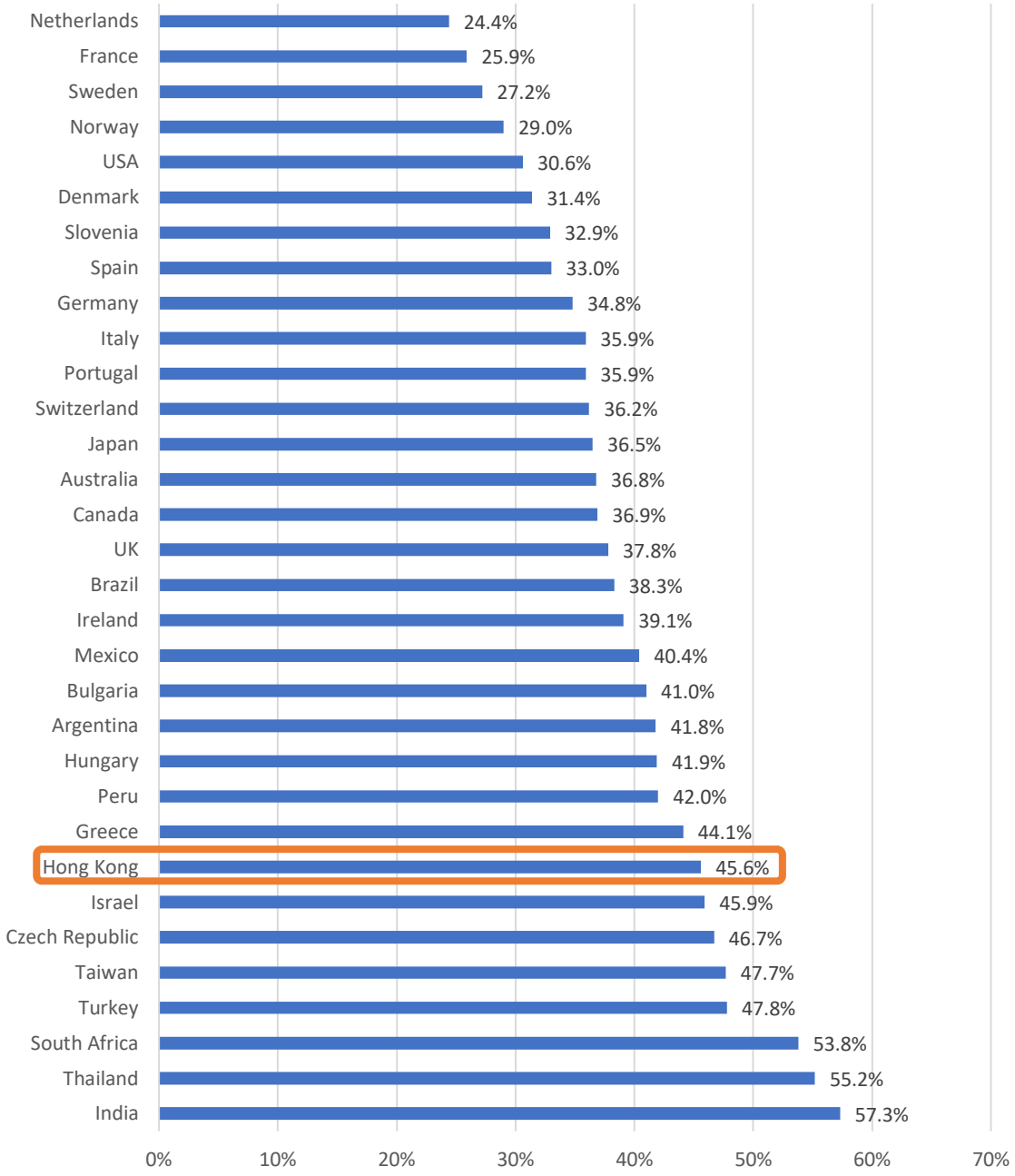


Chart 5. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by age

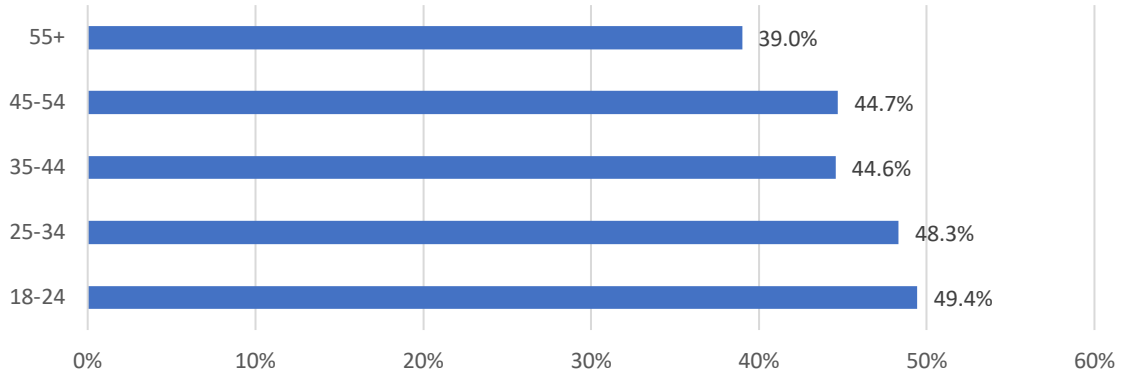
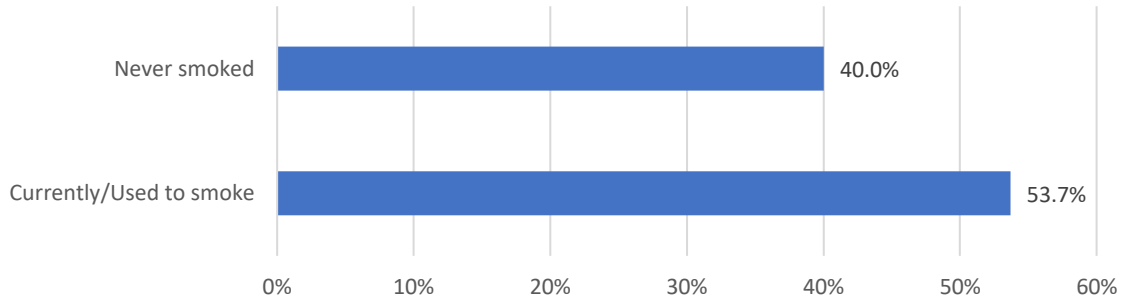


Chart 6. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by smoking status



Views on lung cancer screening

A national lung cancer screening programme is a key measure to reduce the substantial burden that lung cancer places on individuals, families and healthcare systems. Lung cancer screening using low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) can save lives by detecting the disease at an earlier, more treatable stage. A large clinical trial found that LDCT screening reduced lung cancer mortality by 24% in men and 33% in women after 10 years of follow-up compared with no screening.[2]

Support for lung cancer screening was strong in Hong Kong, with 80.8% of respondents agreeing that there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early. While more than eight in ten respondents supported a national programme, support was lower than in many other countries included in the survey.

Hong Kong does not currently have a population-wide national lung cancer screening programme.[3] Given the evidence that LDCT screening can improve early detection and reduce lung cancer mortality, alongside the strong public support identified in this survey, the GLCC calls on policymakers to consider the role that organised lung cancer screening could play in improving outcomes for people at high risk of the disease.

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[2] de Koning, H.J., van der Aalst, C.M., de Jong, P.A. *et al.* (2020) 'Reduced Lung-Cancer Mortality with Volume CT Screening in a Randomized Trial', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(6), pp. 503-513. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1911793

[3] Cancer Screening Guide: Free & Subsidised Screening Programmes in Hong Kong & Eligibility Overview. Available at: https://www.prudential.com.hk/en/knowledge-corner/protecting-health/free-subsidised-screening-programmes-in-hong-kong-eligibility-overview/

Chart 7. Percentage of respondents who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by country

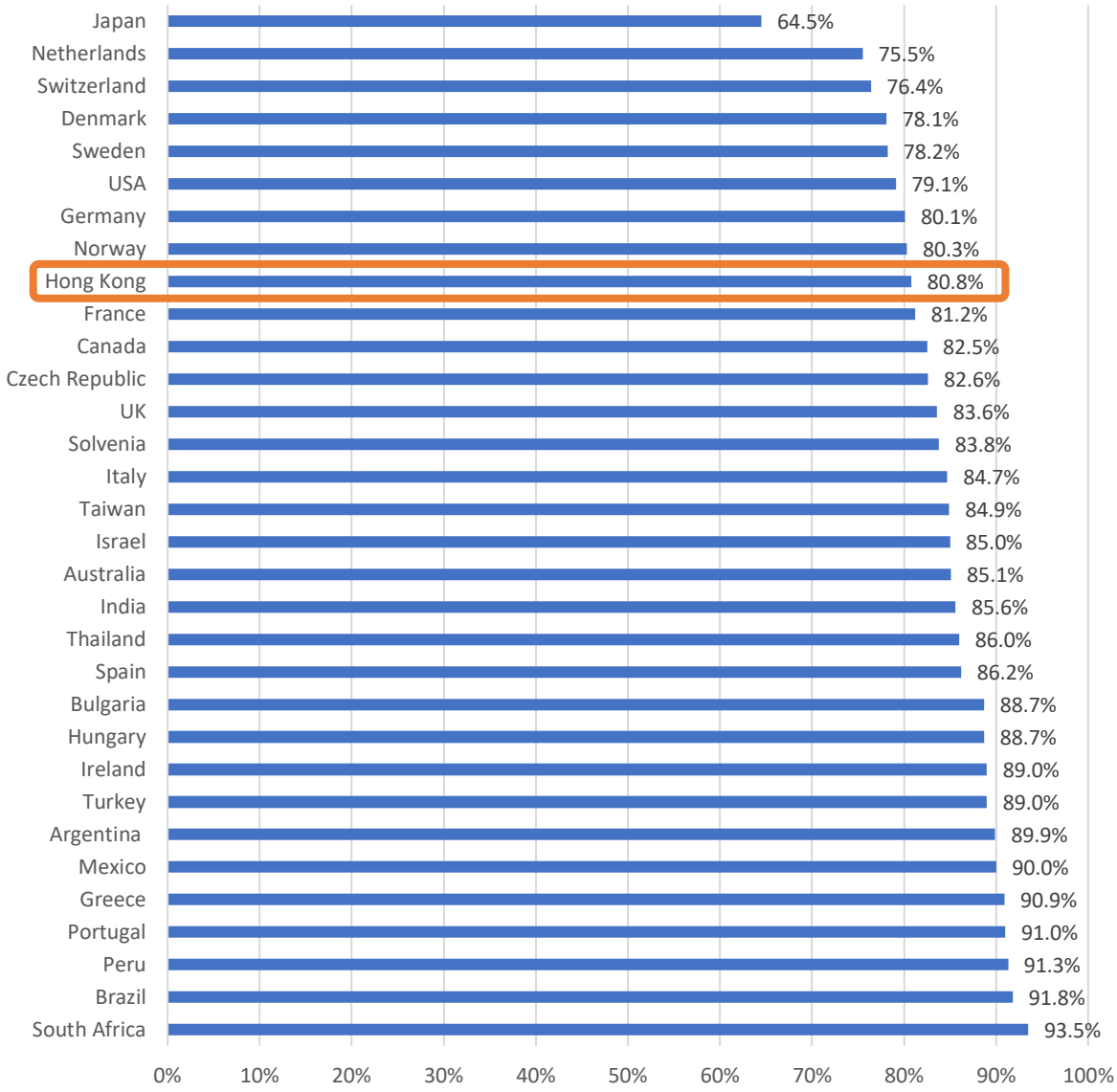


Chart 8. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by age

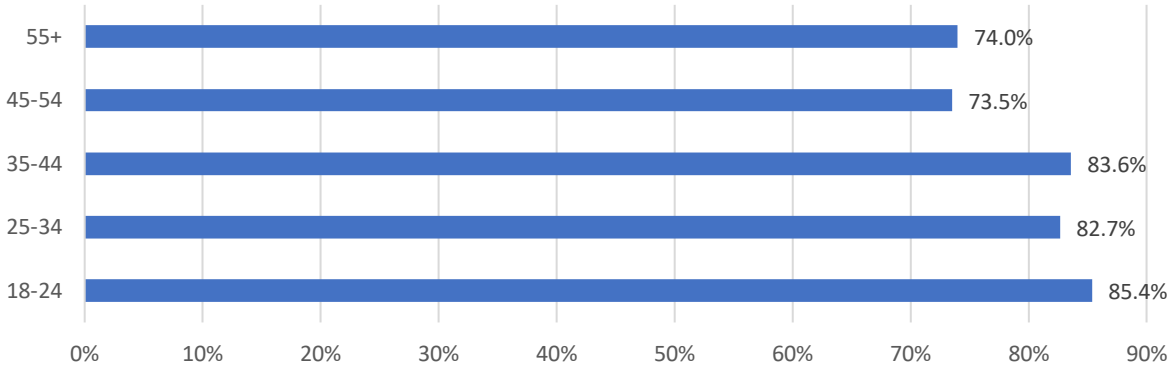
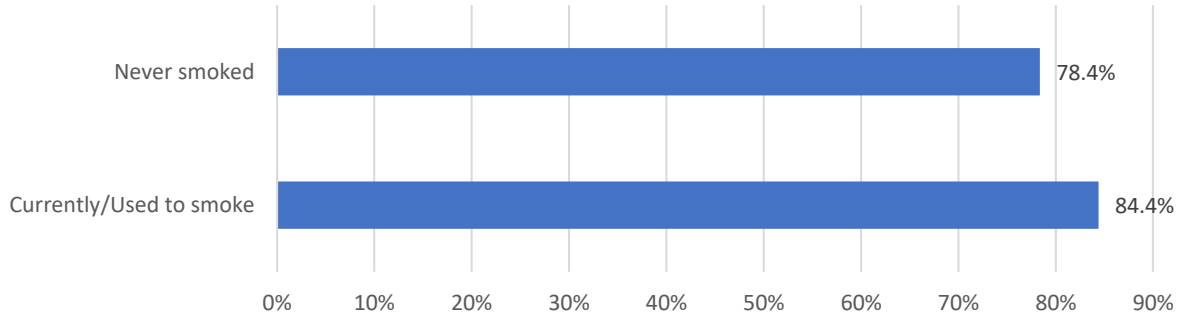


Chart 9. Percentage of respondents in Hong Kong who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by smoking status



Conclusion

The 2026 findings show that Hong Kong has comparatively high levels of lung cancer symptom awareness, with 23.0% of respondents unable to identify any symptoms, one of the lower proportions recorded among countries included in the survey. However, awareness was concentrated around a number of commonly recognised symptoms, while awareness of the broader range of potential lung cancer symptoms was more limited.

At the same time, stigma remains an important challenge. Almost half of respondents (45.6%) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer, above the 2026 global average of 39.2%.

Public support for lung cancer screening is strong, with 80.8% of respondents supporting a national screening programme. Despite Hong Kong not currently having a population-wide national lung cancer screening programme, the findings demonstrate strong public backing for efforts to improve earlier detection.

Together, these findings highlight the importance of continued action to raise awareness of lung cancer symptoms, challenge stigma and misconceptions, and support earlier detection and diagnosis.

More information

Established in 2001, the GLCC comprises 44 non-government patient organisations from 32 nations / territories: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UK and USA.

The GLCC promotes global understanding of lung cancer and the right of patients to effective early detection, better treatment and supportive care. By serving as the international voice of lung cancer patients, the GLCC is committed to improving disease outcomes for all.

For more information about this study and the work of the GLCC please visit: www.lungcancercoalition.org or email our secretariat at: glcc@roycastle.org.