GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

Hungary 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. Hungary 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 Hungary in 2026 and how they compare with other countries included in the survey. The results highlight three key themes:

- **Awareness of lung cancer symptoms** remains mixed, with more than a third of respondents unable to identify any symptoms of lung cancer, despite relatively strong recognition of common warning signs such as persistent coughs, shortness of breath and coughing up blood.
- **Levels of stigma** towards people with lung cancer remain significant, with Hungary recording a higher-than-average proportion of respondents reporting less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer.
- **Public support for lung cancer screening** is very strong, with Hungary among the countries showing the highest levels of support for a national screening programme to help diagnose lung cancer earlier.

Key findings: Hungary

Symptom recognition

- More than a **third** (**36.9%**) said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer.
- Men were more likely than women to report not knowing any symptoms (**39.1% vs. 35.4%**).
- Young people **aged 18–24** were most likely to report not knowing any symptoms (**44.0%**), compared with **32.8%** of those **aged 55 and over**.
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were slightly more likely than those who have never smoked to report not knowing any symptoms (**36.8% vs. 33.8%**).

Attitudes towards lung cancer

- More than **four in ten** (**41.9%**) respondents reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, compared with the 2026 global average of 39.2%.
- Men were more likely than women to report having less sympathy (**49.9% vs. 36.4%**).
- People aged 18–24 were most likely to report having less sympathy (**51.1%**), while those aged 55+ were least likely to do so (**24.4%**).
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were less likely than people who have never smoked to report having less sympathy towards people with lung cancer (**41.1% vs. 45.6%**).

Views on lung cancer screening

- Almost **nine in ten** (**88.7%**) people agreed there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early.
- Women and men both showed high levels of support for lung cancer screening programmes (**88.8% vs. 88.5%**).
- Support for screening was high across all age groups, ranging from **91.6%** among people **aged 55+** to **87.2%** among those **aged 45-54**.
- People who currently smoke or have smoked were slightly less likely to support a national screening programme than people who have never smoked (**90% vs. 88.8%**).

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 over 1,000 adults from Hungary 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 vital, as earlier diagnosis improves treatment outcomes.

In Hungary, 36.9% of respondents said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer. This is slightly below the global average and places Hungary broadly in the middle range of the countries included in the survey. While awareness appears stronger than in several European countries, more than one in three people were still unable to identify any symptoms, highlighting the need for continued public education to improve recognition of the disease and encourage earlier help-seeking.

The symptoms most commonly identified by respondents were persistent coughs, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, and coughing up blood or bloody sputum. Chest pain, weight loss,

fatigue and hoarseness were also mentioned relatively frequently. However, several important symptoms appeared to be much less widely recognised, including persistent fatigue, loss of appetite, repeated chest infections, and changes in the voice, suggesting that public understanding remains concentrated around the most visible respiratory symptoms rather than the broader range of potential warning signs.

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

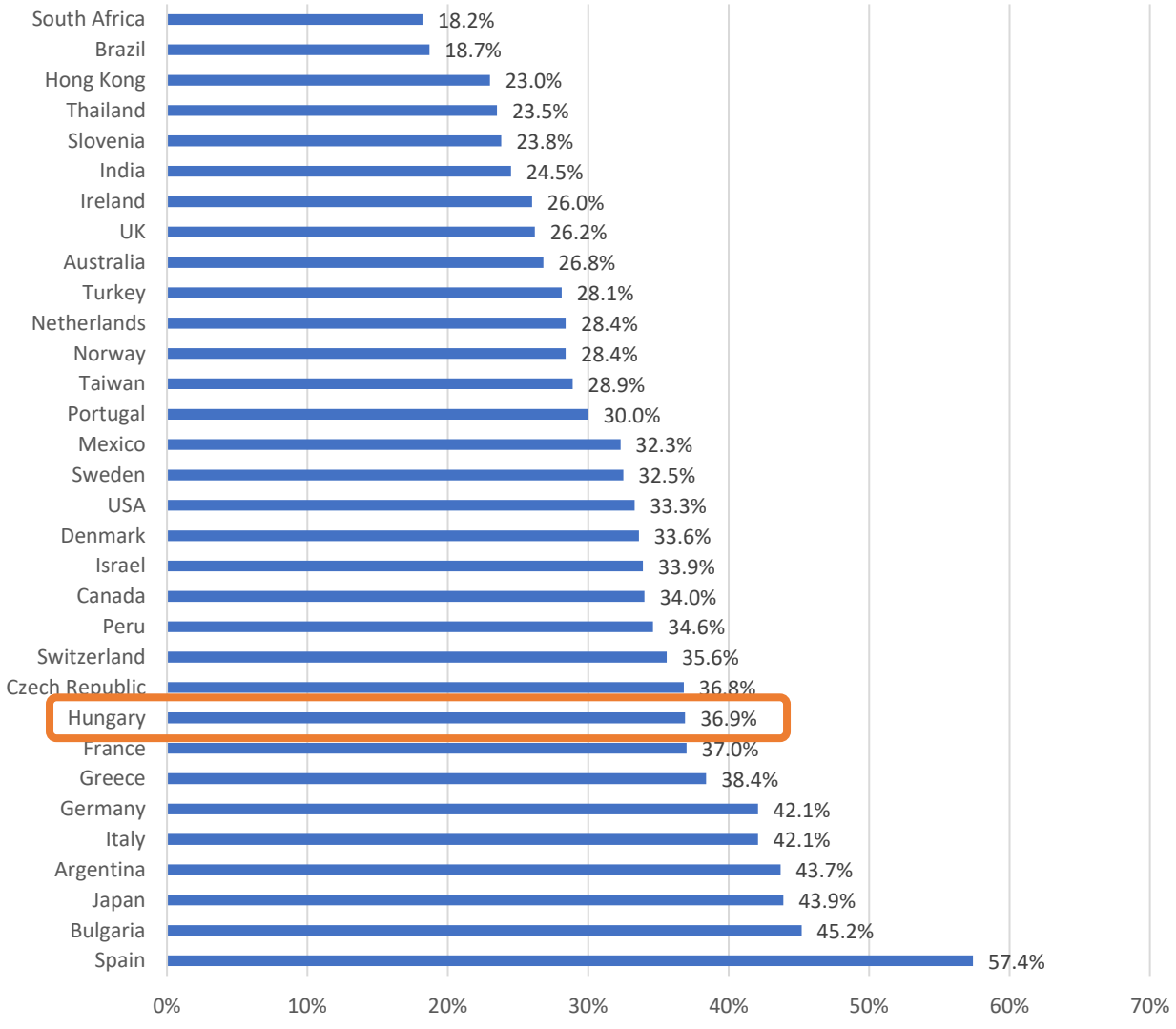


Chart 2. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who indicated they did not know any symptoms, by age

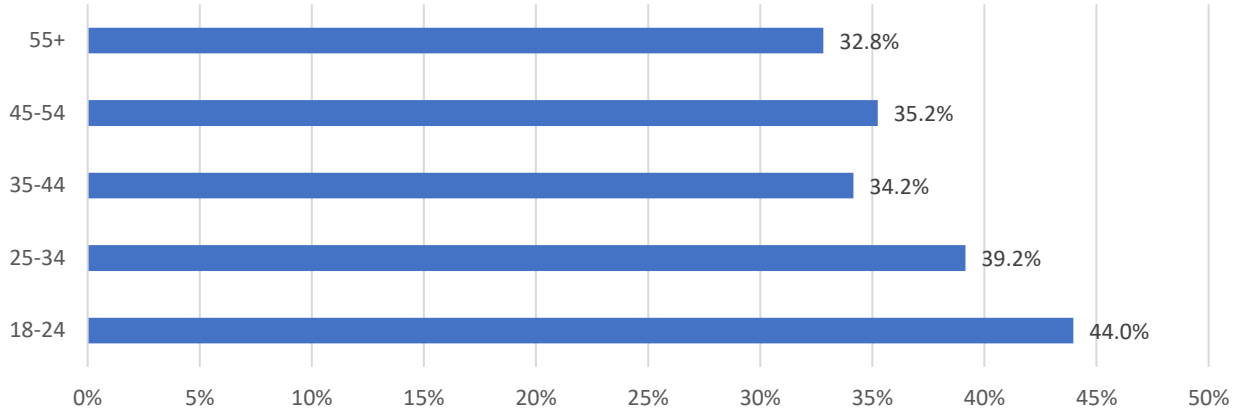
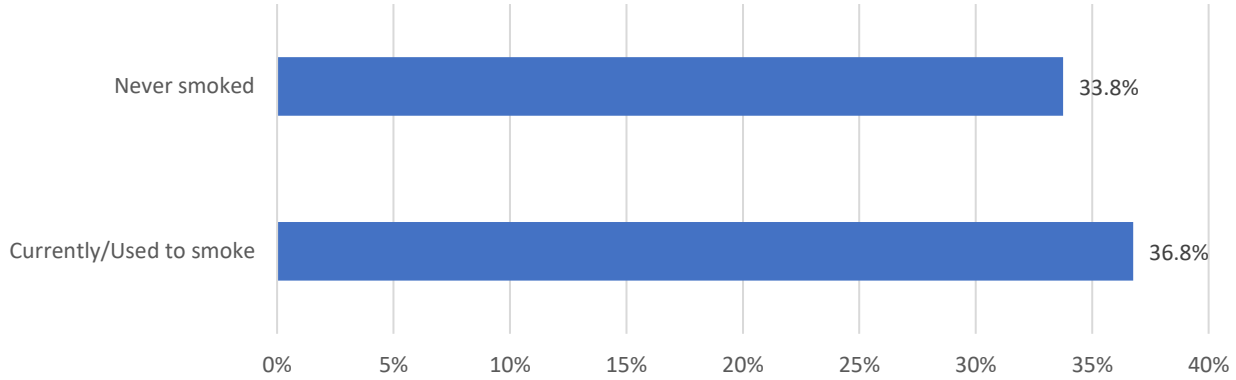


Chart 3. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who indicated they did not know any symptoms of smoking, by status



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 Hungary, 41.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer. This is slightly higher than the global average of 39.2%. The findings suggest that misconceptions about personal responsibility for lung cancer remain widespread and reinforce the need for public awareness initiatives that challenge blame and highlight that anyone can develop 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

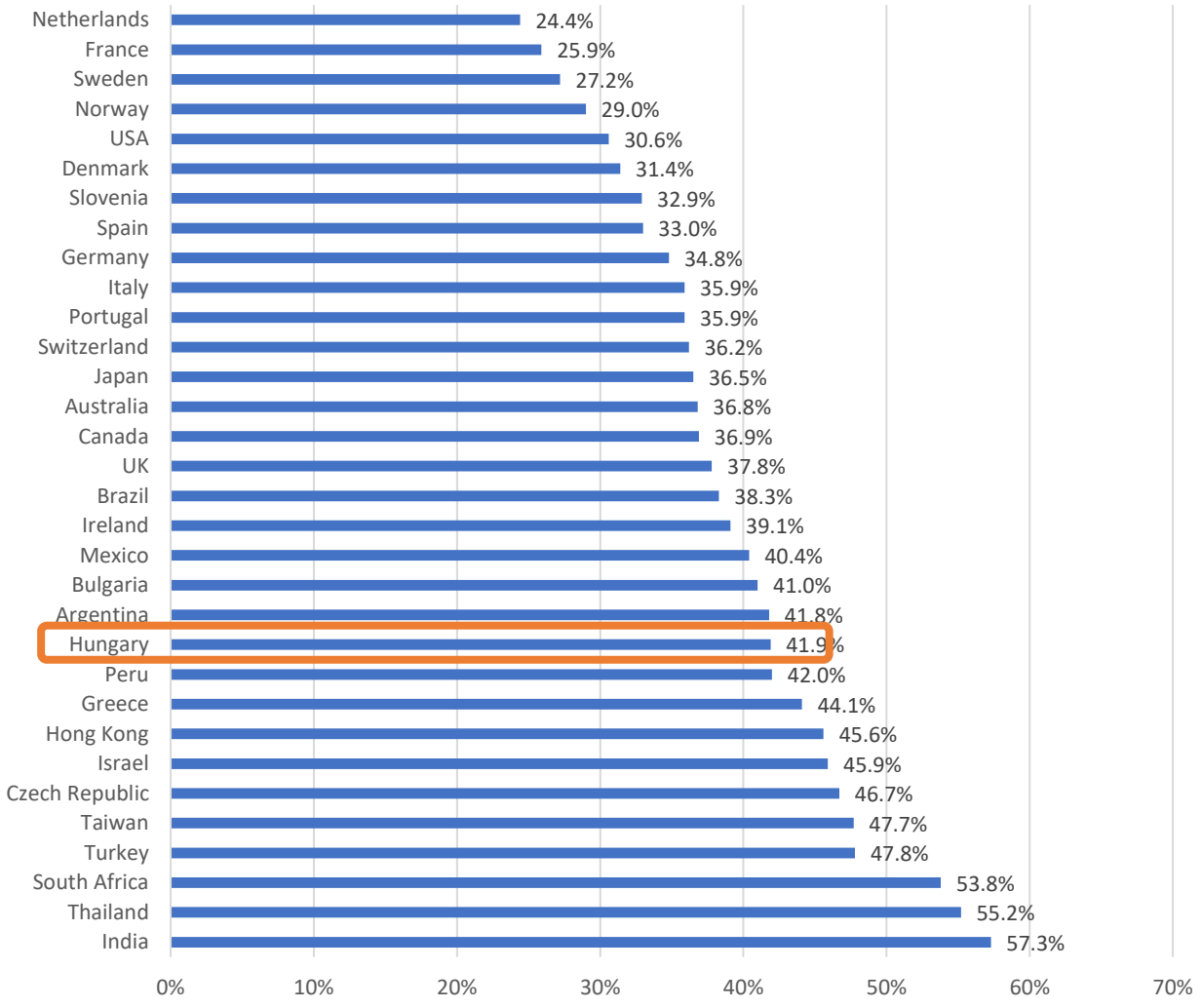


Chart 5. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by age

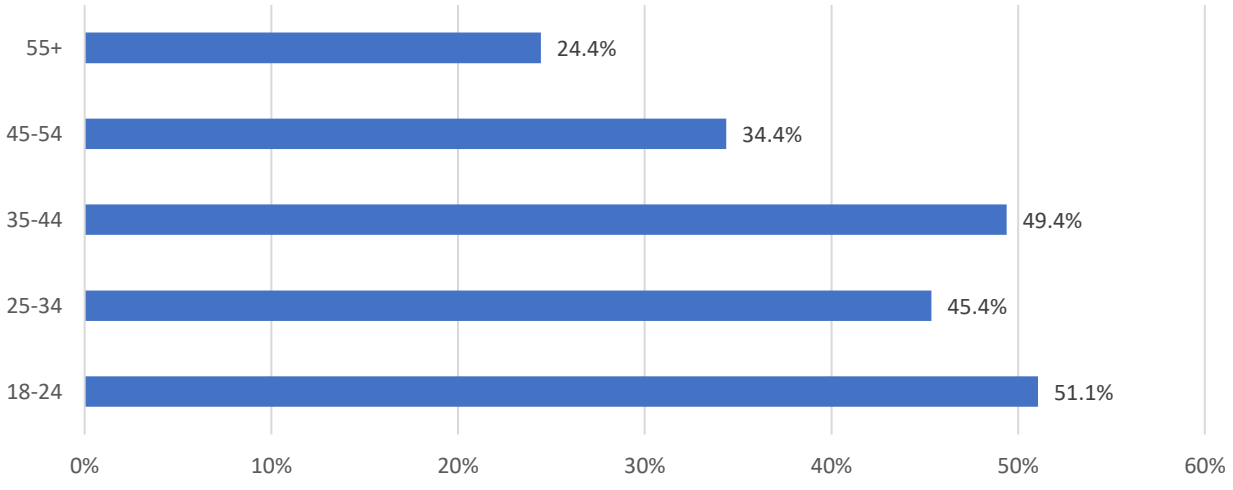
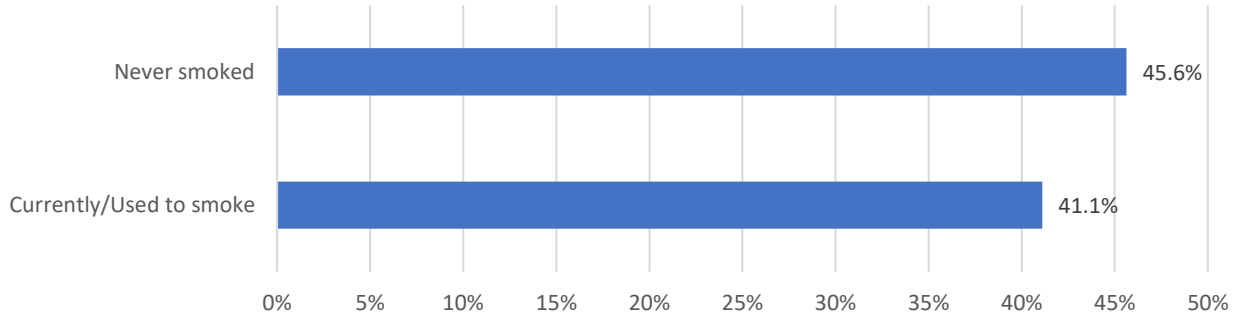


Chart 6. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by smoking status



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 very strong in Hungary, with 88.7% of respondents agreeing that there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early. This places Hungary among the countries with the strongest support for screening in the survey.

Hungary does not currently have a national lung cancer screening programme. Given the strong public support identified in this research and the evidence that LDCT screening can reduce lung cancer mortality through earlier diagnosis, there is a clear opportunity to build on existing pilot and research initiatives and move towards a nationally coordinated screening approach. The GLCC therefore calls on policymakers to implement a national lung cancer screening programme to help ensure more people are diagnosed at a stage when treatment is most effective.

[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

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

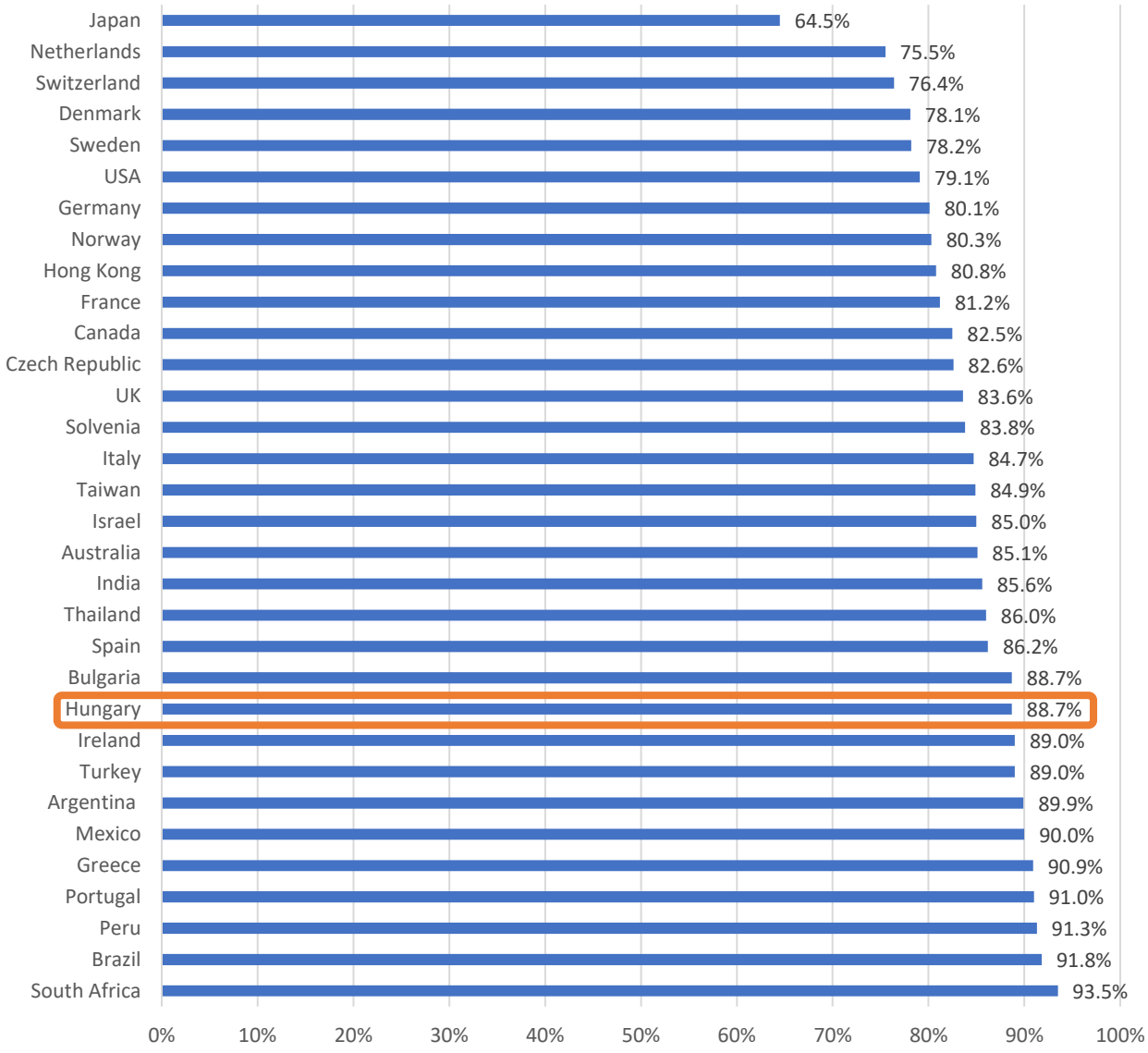


Chart 8. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by age

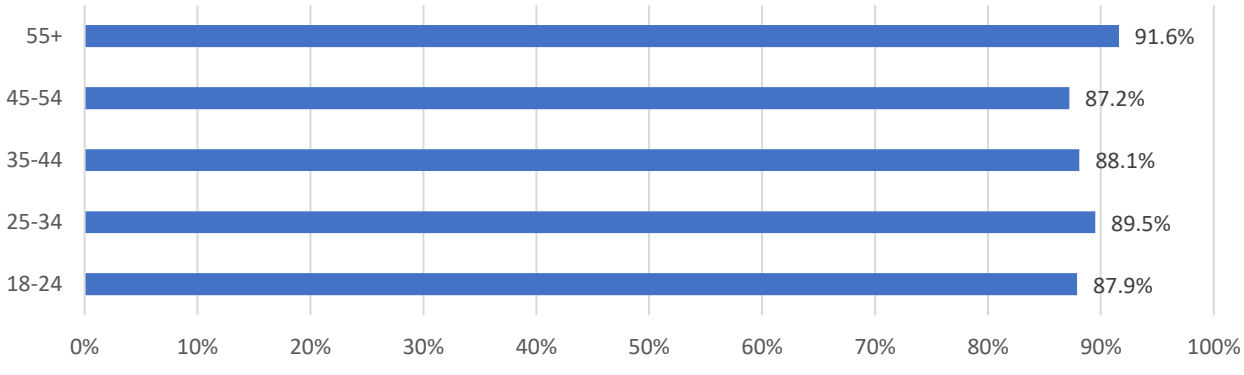
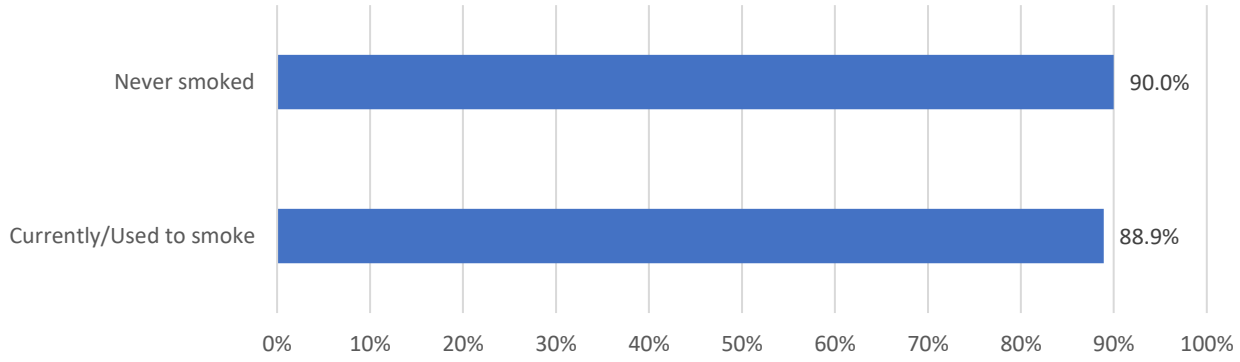


Chart 9. Percentage of respondents in Hungary who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by smoking status



Conclusion

The 2026 findings show that important challenges remain in Hungary. More than a third of people could not identify a single symptom of lung cancer, while awareness was largely limited to common warning signs such as persistent coughs, shortness of breath and coughing up blood.

At the same time, stigma remains a significant issue, with more than four in ten people reporting less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other cancers, a figure above the global average.

Public support for lung cancer screening is very strong, with almost nine in ten respondents supporting a national screening programme. These findings highlight the need for continued investment in public awareness, action to tackle stigma and progress towards implementing lung cancer screening in Hungary. The GLCC will use these findings to support advocacy and awareness activities aimed at improving outcomes for everyone affected by lung cancer.

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.