GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

Ireland 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.

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 Ireland 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 Ireland ranking among the countries with stronger levels of symptom recognition and performing similarly to the UK.
- **Levels of stigma towards people with lung cancer** remain significant, with around four in ten respondents reporting less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer.
- **Public support for lung cancer screening** is among the highest recorded in the survey, reflecting strong backing for efforts to improve earlier diagnosis and support the introduction of a national lung cancer screening programme in Ireland.

Key findings: Ireland

Symptom recognition

- **One in four** people responding to the survey (**26.0%**) said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer, compared with **28.2%** in **2023**.
- Men were more likely than women to report not knowing any symptoms (**30.9% vs. 23.6%**).
- People **aged 18-24** were most likely to report not knowing any symptoms (**35.0%**), while those **aged 25-34** were the least likely to do so (**22.9%**).
- There was little difference between people who currently smoke or have smoked and those who have never smoked (**25.9% vs. 26.2%**).

Attitudes towards lung cancer

- Almost **four in ten** people (**39.1%**) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, compared with **39.9%** in **2023** and **39.2% globally.**

- Men were more likely than women to hold this view (**56.9% vs. 30.5%**).
- People **aged 18-24** were the most likely to agree with this statement (**45.3%**), while those **aged 55 and over** were the least likely (**31.7%**).
- People who have never smoked were slightly more likely than people who currently smoke or have smoked to report having less sympathy (**40.4% vs. 38.7%**).

Views on lung cancer screening

- Almost **nine in ten** people (**89.0%**) agreed there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, commensurate with **88.8%** in **2023**.
- Women were more supportive than men (**90.4% vs. 86.9%**).
- Support was consistently high across all age groups, ranging from **87.6%** among people **aged 45-54** to **90.8%** among those **aged 35-44**.
- Support was similarly strong among people who currently smoke or have smoked and those who have never smoked (**89.2% vs. 88.9%**).

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 Ireland 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 Ireland, 26.0% of respondents said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer, compared with 28.2% in 2023. This is below the 2026 global average and places Ireland among the countries with comparatively high levels of symptom awareness.

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

around a number of commonly recognised symptoms, while awareness of the broader range of potential lung cancer symptoms remain more limited.

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

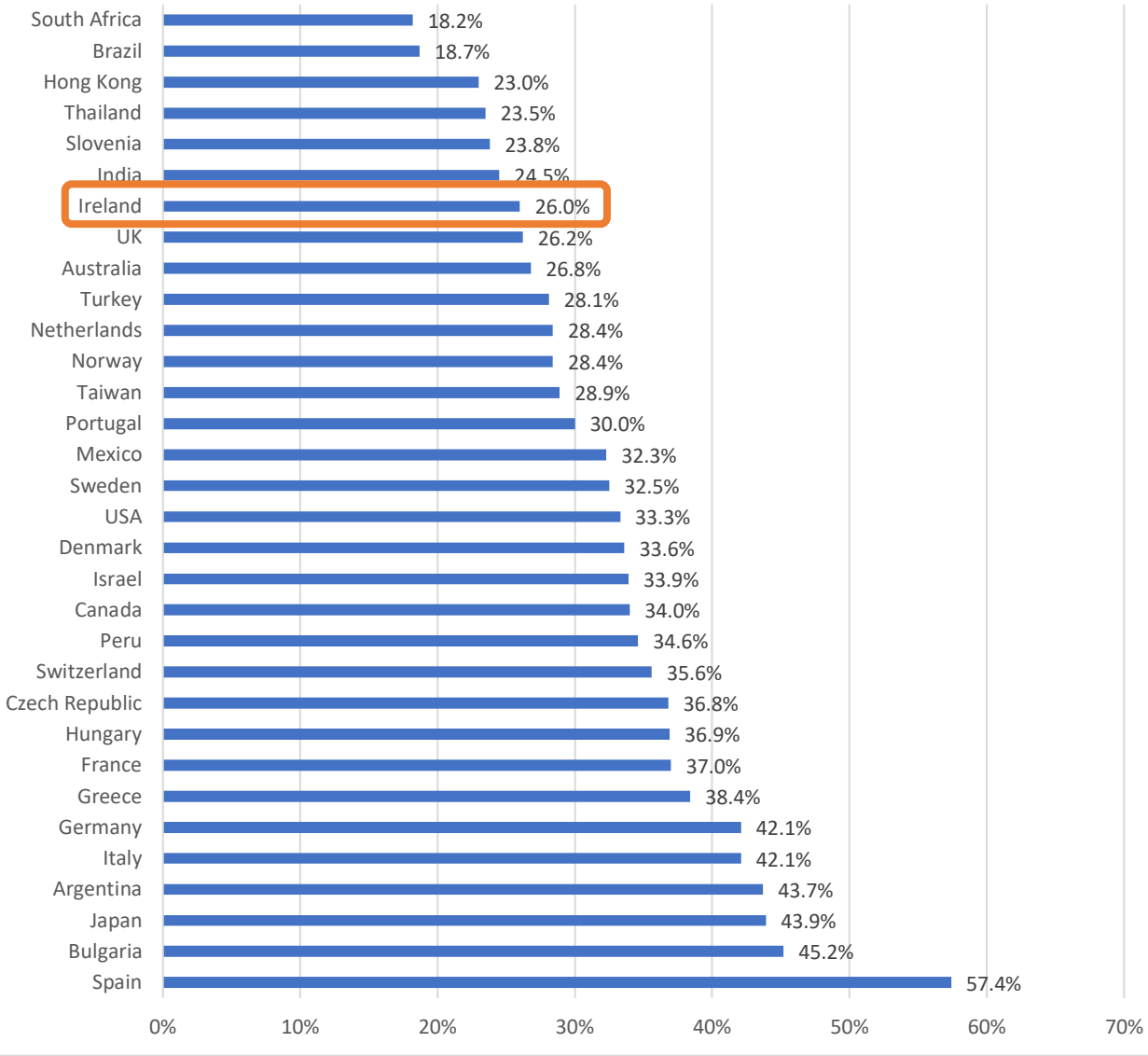


Chart 2. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who indicated they did not know any symptoms, by age

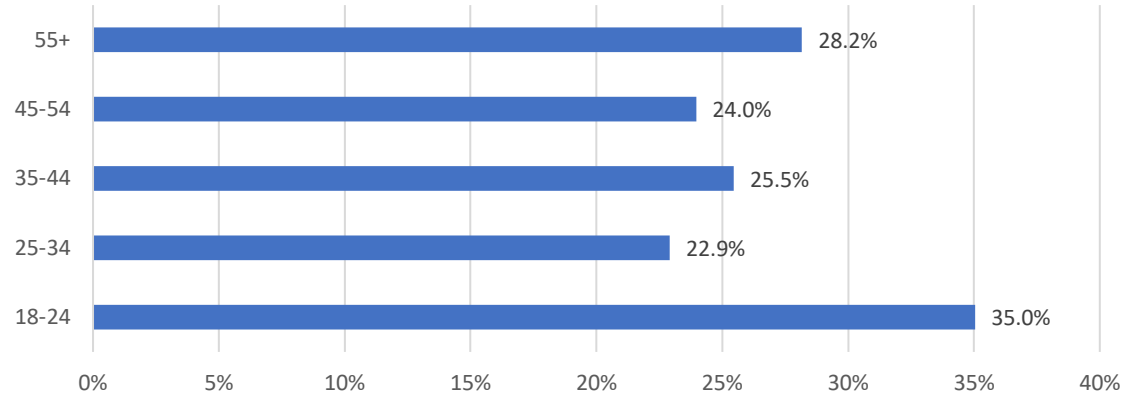
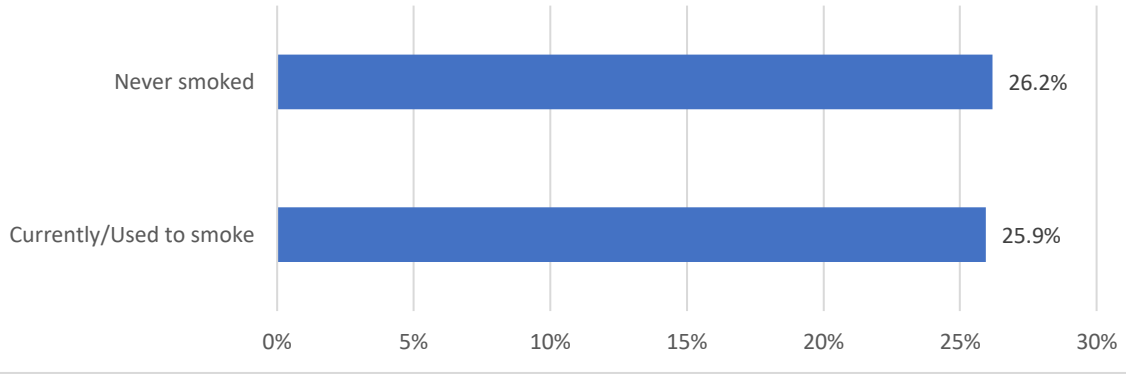


Chart 3. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who indicated they did not know any symptoms of smoking, by status



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 Ireland, 39.1% of respondents reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, broadly unchanged from 39.9% in 2023. This is in line with the 2026 global average of 39.2%. However, almost four in ten respondents still expressed this view, indicating that stigma remains an important issue. 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

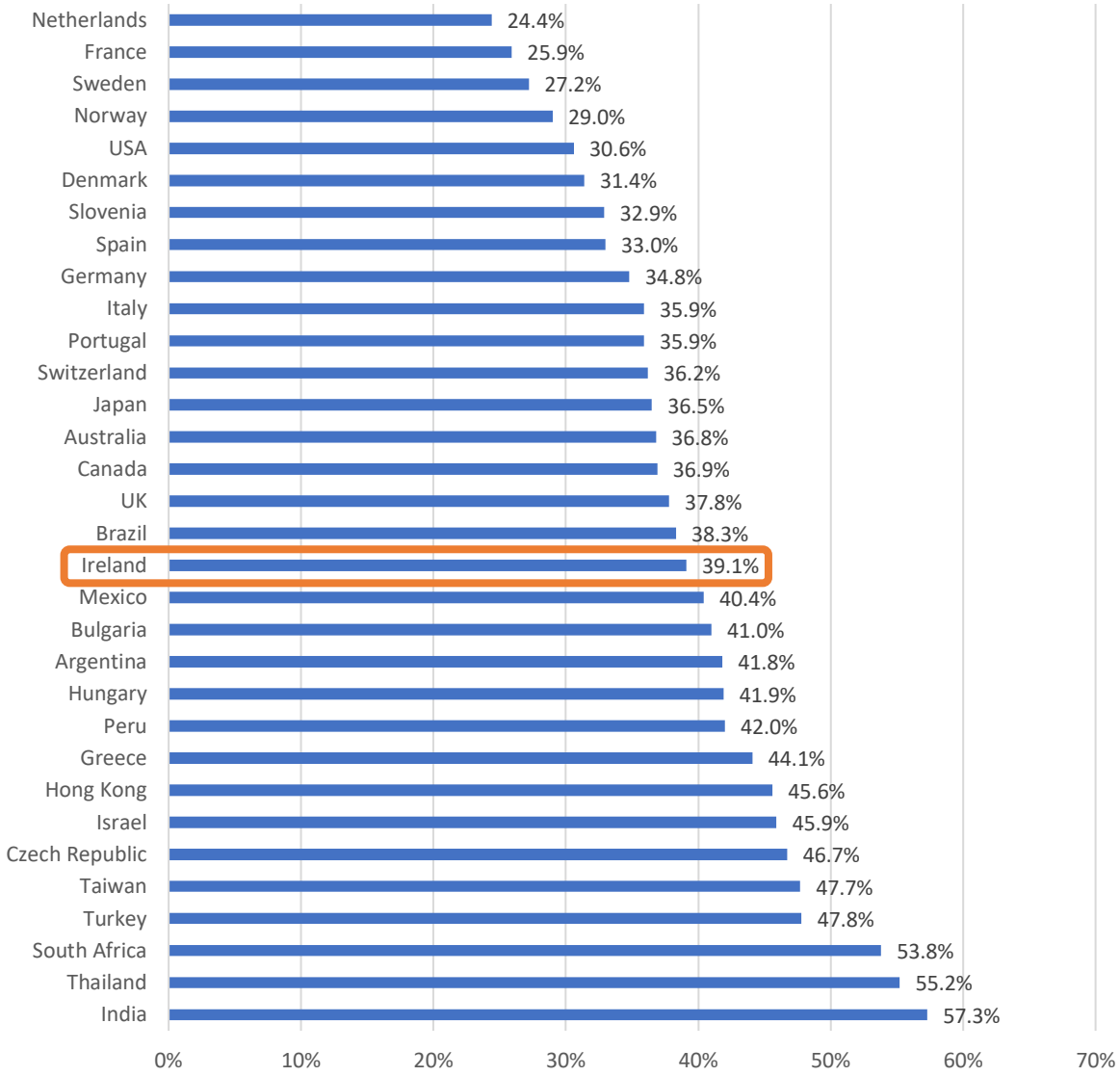


Chart 5. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by age

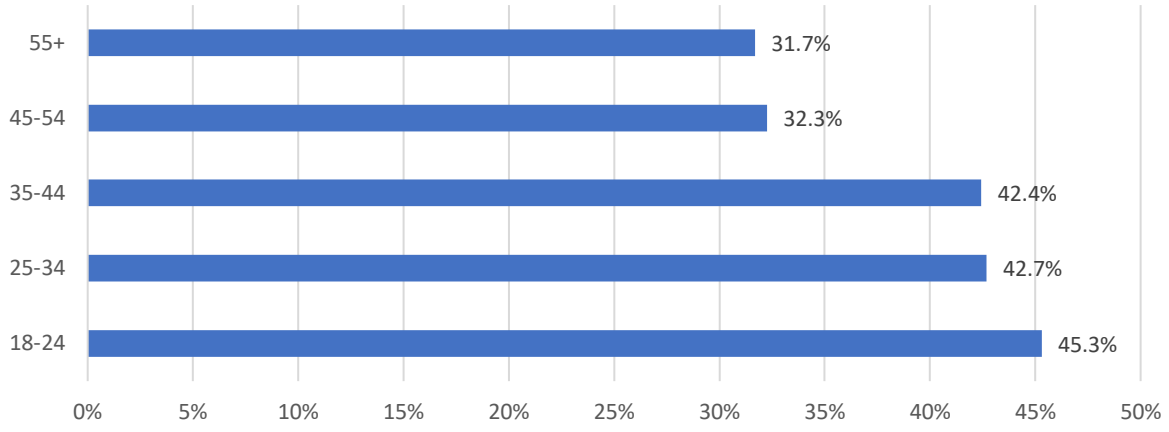
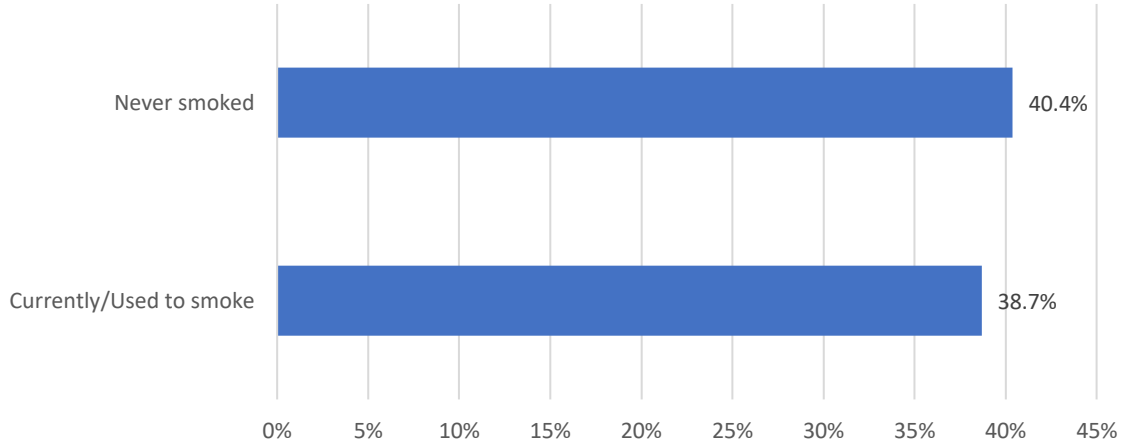


Chart 6. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by smoking status



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 is very strong in Ireland, with 89.0% of respondents agreeing that there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, commensurate with 88.8% in 2023. This demonstrates strong and growing public support for measures to improve earlier diagnosis.

[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

Ireland does not currently have a national lung cancer screening programme. Given the evidence that LDCT screening can support earlier detection and reduce lung cancer mortality, alongside the strong public support identified in this survey, the GLCC calls on policymakers to consider the introduction of a national lung cancer screening programme to help improve outcomes for people at risk of lung cancer.

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

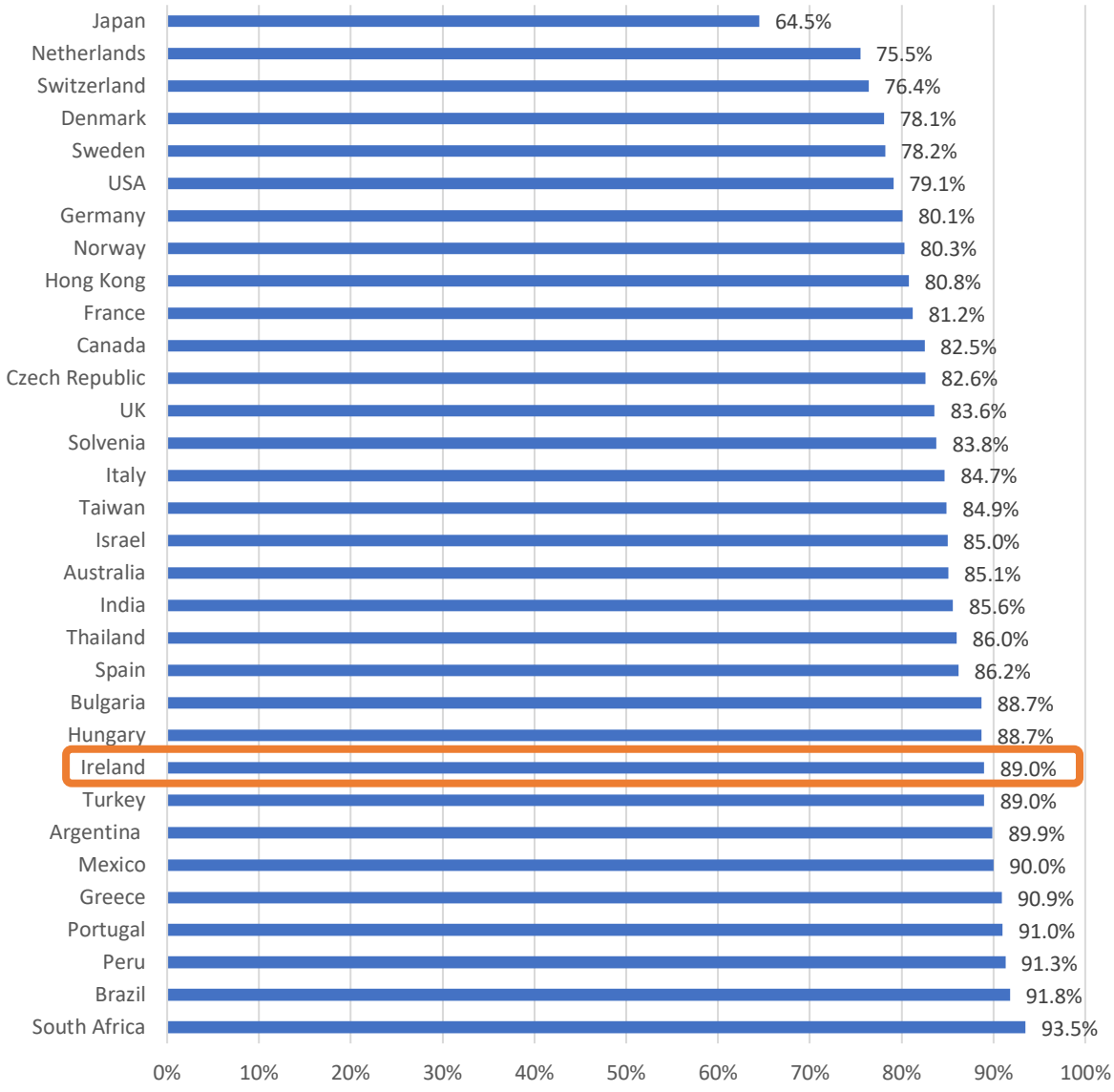


Chart 8. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by age

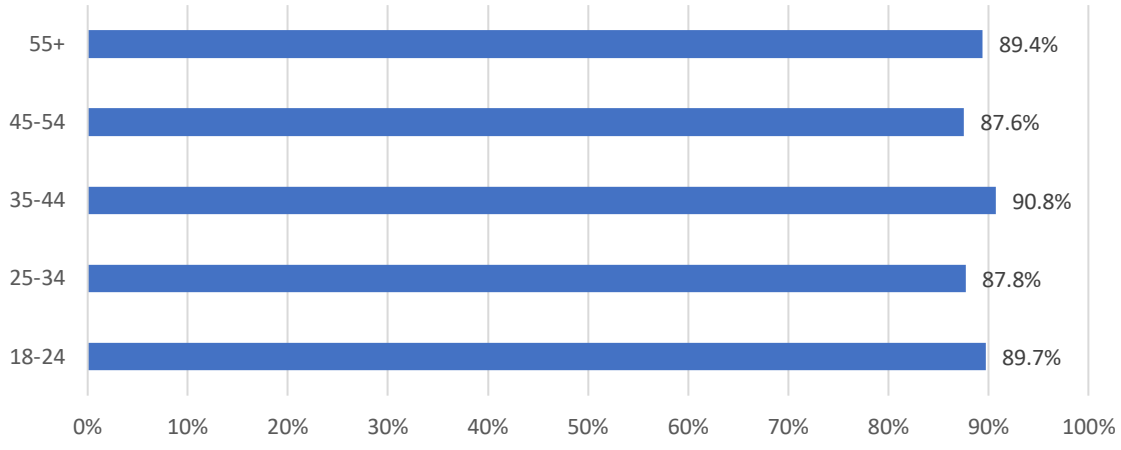
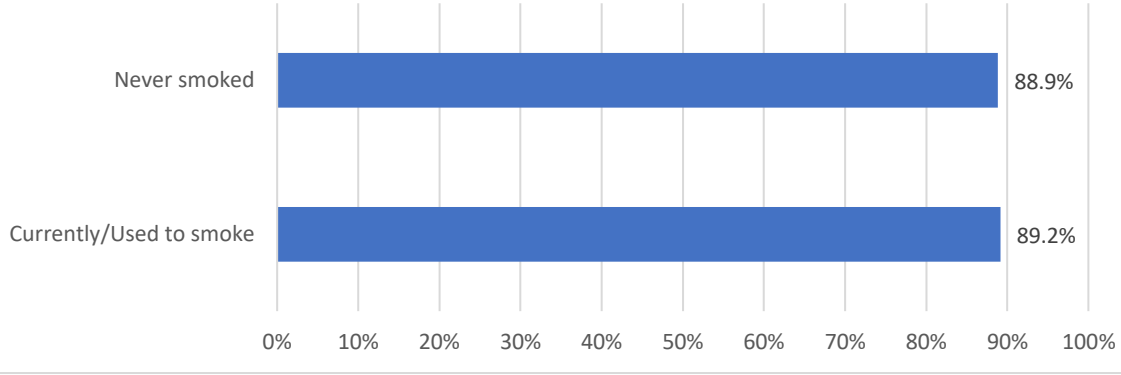


Chart 9. Percentage of respondents in Ireland who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by smoking status



Conclusion

The 2026 findings show that Ireland has comparatively high levels of lung cancer symptom awareness and very strong public support for lung cancer screening. However, more than a quarter of respondents (26.0%) were unable to identify any symptoms of lung cancer, although this was down from 28.2% in 2023 and below the 2026 global average.

At the same time, stigma surrounding lung cancer remains an important issue. Almost four in ten respondents (39.1%) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer, broadly unchanged from 39.9% in 2023 and in line with the 2026 global average of 39.2%.

Public support for lung cancer screening is very strong, with 89.0% of respondents supporting a national lung cancer screening programme, commensurate with 88.8% in 2023. This demonstrates strong public backing for efforts to improve earlier detection and diagnosis.

These findings highlight the importance of continued investment in public awareness, action to challenge stigma and misconceptions, and efforts to support the introduction of a national lung cancer screening programme in Ireland. The GLCC will use these findings to support advocacy and awareness activities aimed at improving outcomes for everyone affected by lung cancer in Ireland.

GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

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.