GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

Italy 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 Italy 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 low**, with Italy ranking among the countries with the highest proportions of people unable to identify any symptoms of lung cancer. More than four in ten respondents were unable to name a single symptom, highlighting a significant need for improved public awareness.
- **Levels of stigma towards people with lung cancer remain significant**, with more than a third of respondents reporting less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer. Although lower than the global average, these findings suggest misconceptions and blame associated with lung cancer remain a challenge.
- **Public support for lung cancer screening remains strong**, with more than eight in ten respondents supporting a national screening programme to help diagnose lung cancer earlier. This reflects strong public backing for efforts to expand access to screening and improve early detection across Italy.

Key findings: Italy

Symptom recognition

- More than **four in ten** people responding to the survey (**42.1%**) said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer, down from **48.7%** in **2023,** but still placing Italy among the countries with the lowest levels of symptom awareness in the survey.
- Men were more likely than women to report not knowing any symptoms (**44.8% vs. 39.7%**).
- People **aged 25-34** were most likely to report not knowing any symptoms (**46.8%**), followed closely by those **aged 55 and over** (**45.9%**).
- People who had never smoked were more likely than those who currently smoke or had smoked previously to report not knowing any symptoms (**46.0% vs 40.2%**).

Attitudes towards lung cancer

- More than a **third** of respondents (**35.9%**) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, down from **44.3%** in **2023** and below the **2026 global average** of **39.2%.**
- Men were more likely than women to report having less sympathy (**42.0% vs. 30.4%**).
- People **aged 25-34** were the most likely to report having less sympathy (**41.0%**), while people **aged 55 and over** were the least likely to do so (**32.3%**).
- People who currently smoke or had smoked previously were slightly more likely than those who had never smoked to report less sympathy towards people with lung cancer (**36.7% vs. 34.0%**).

Views on lung cancer screening

- More than **eight in ten** respondents (**84.7%**) agreed there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, compared with **85.9%** in **2023,** indicating that support remains consistently strong.
- Women were more supportive than men (**86.2% vs. 83.0%**).
- Support was highest among people **aged 55 and over** (**88.1%**).
- People who currently smoke or had smoked previously were more supportive than those who had never smoked (**86.9% vs. 80.0%**).

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 Italy 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 2026, 42.1% of people in Italy said they did not know any symptoms of lung cancer, down from 48.7% in 2023. This is above the 2026 global average of 32.7% and places Italy among the countries with lower levels of symptom awareness in the survey. More than four in ten respondents were still unable to identify any symptoms, highlighting the importance of continued awareness efforts.

Among respondents who could identify symptoms, the most commonly recognised were persistent cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, coughing up blood, and chest pain. Respondents also identified fatigue, unexplained weight loss, hoarseness or changes to the voice, back or shoulder pain, loss of appetite, and recurrent respiratory infections such as bronchitis or pneumonia, although these were less commonly recognised.

The findings suggest that awareness in Italy 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

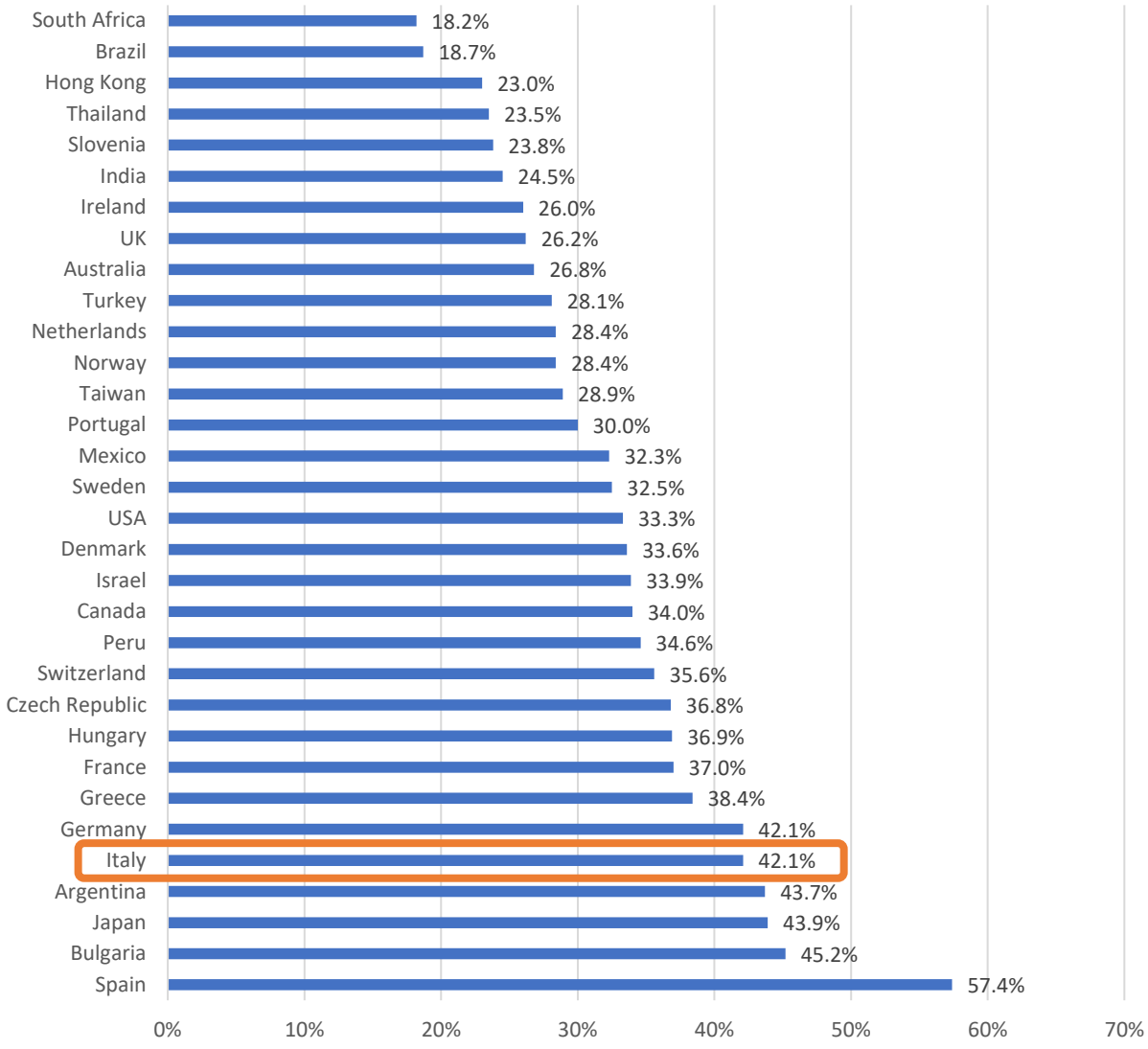


Chart 2. Percentage of respondents in Italy who indicated they did not know any symptoms, by age

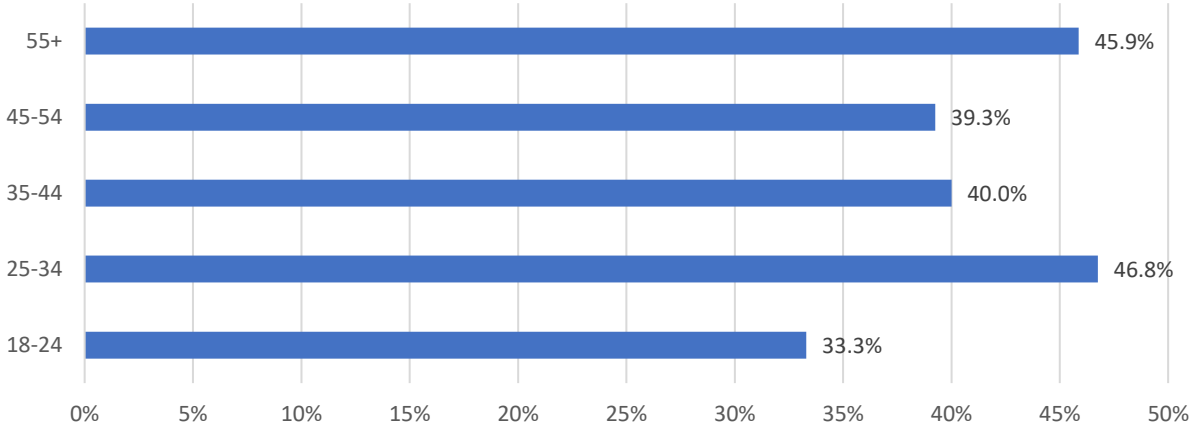
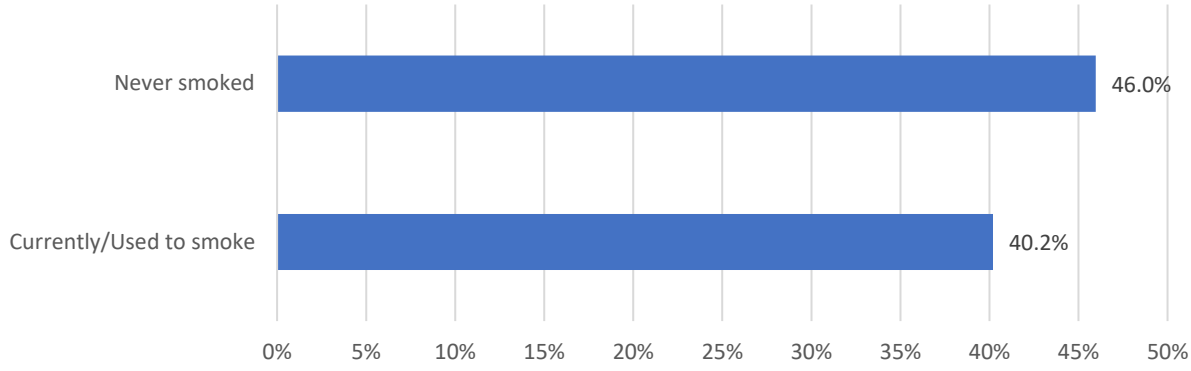


Chart 3. Percentage of respondents in Italy who indicated they did not know any symptoms of smoking, by status



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 Italy, 35.9% of respondents reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for people with other types of cancer, down from 44.3% in 2023. This is below the 2026 global average of 39.2% and places Italy among the countries with lower levels of reported stigma in the survey. However, more than a third of 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

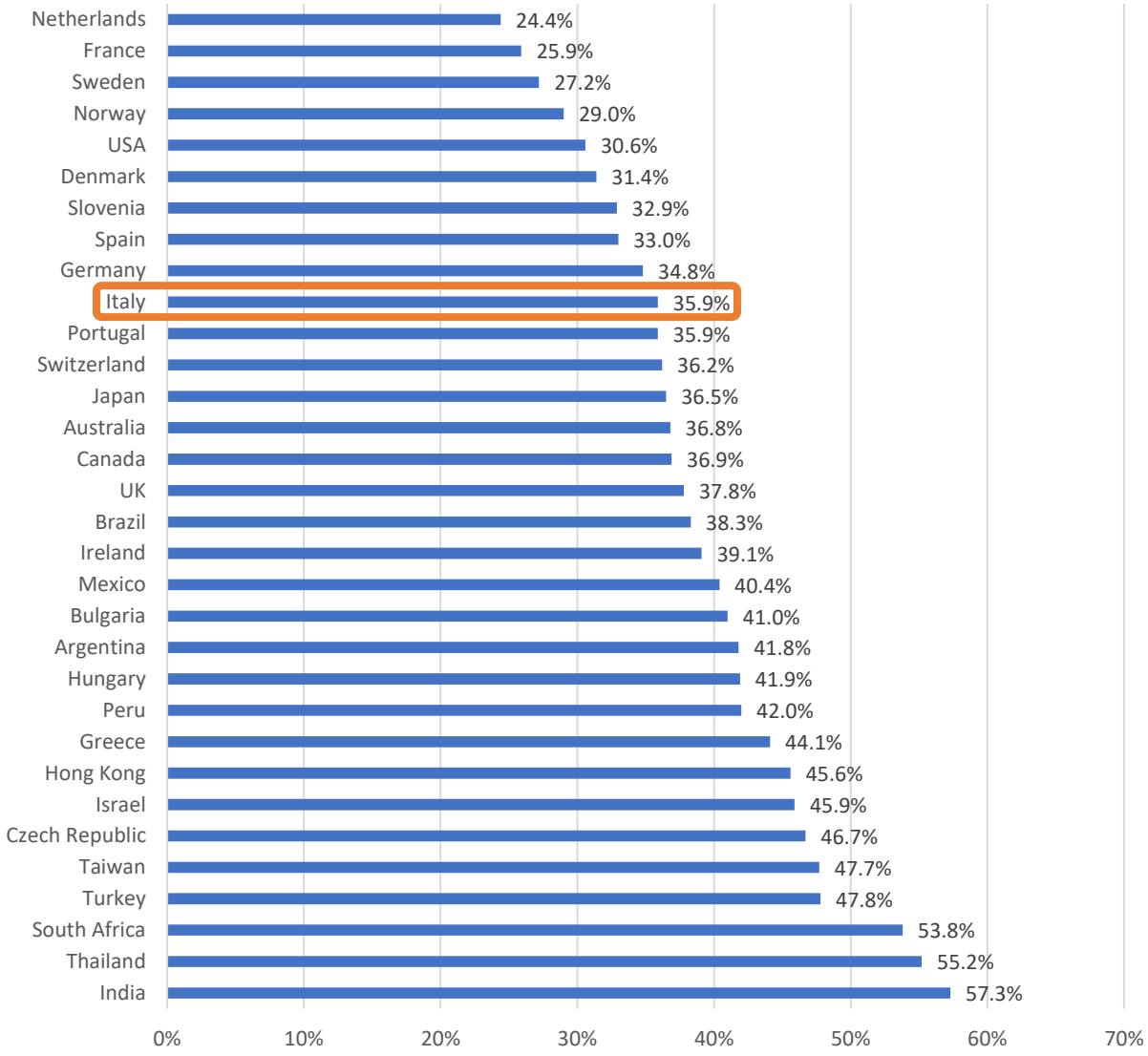


Chart 5. Percentage of respondents in Italy who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by age

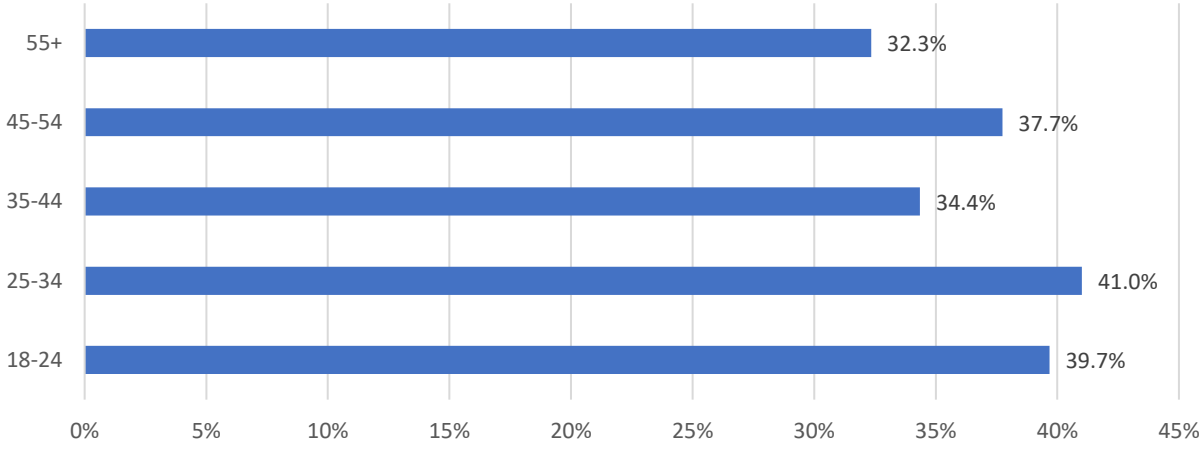
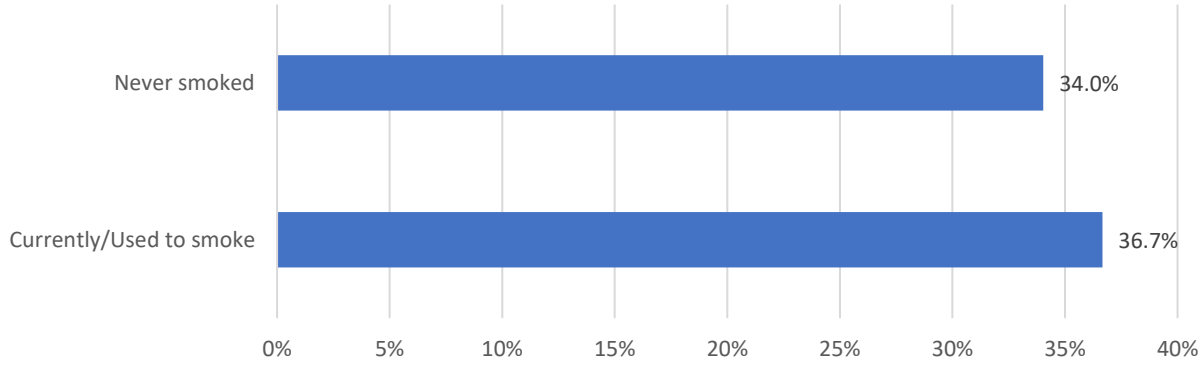


Chart 6. Percentage of respondents in Italy who agree with the statement they have less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for other types of cancer, by smoking status



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 Italy, with 84.7% of respondents agreeing that there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, broadly unchanged from 85.9% in 2023. This demonstrates strong and sustained public support for measures to improve earlier diagnosis.

Italy is currently implementing lung cancer screening through pilot and regional initiatives, with increasing policy focus on expanding access for high-risk populations.[3] The strong public support identified in this survey provides further backing for efforts to develop access to screening and support earlier detection and 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

[3] Coreline Soft Renews AI Lung Cancer Screening Partnership with Italy's National Cancer Institute. Available at: https://web.corelinesoft.com/en/news/italy-lung-cancer-screening-risp-ai-infrastructure-coreline

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

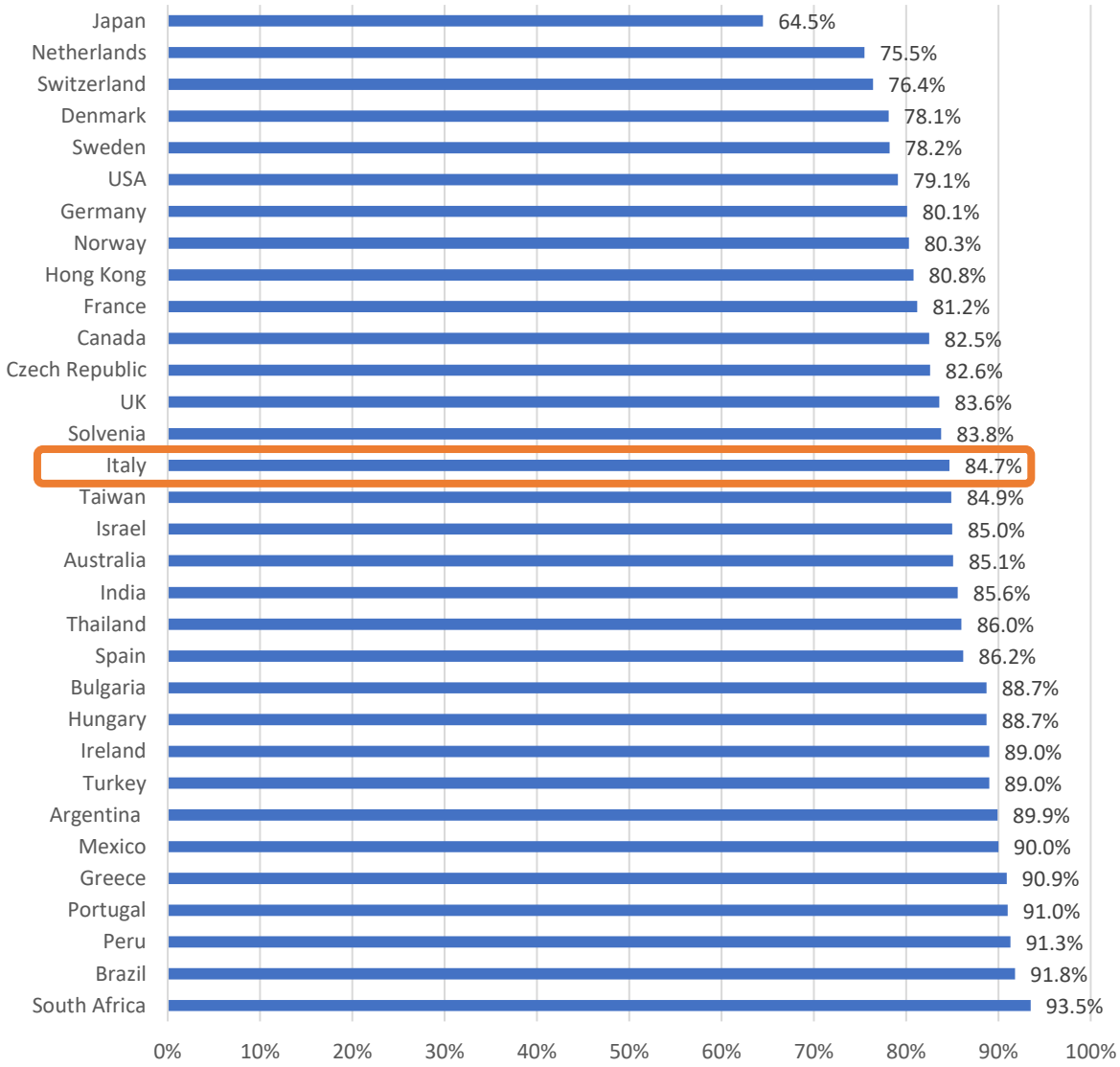


Chart 8. Percentage of respondents in Italy who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by age

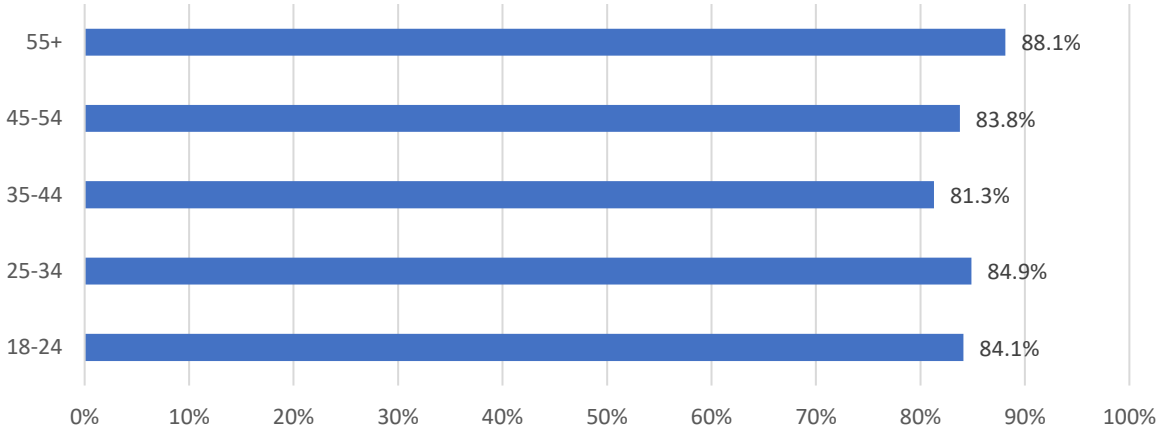
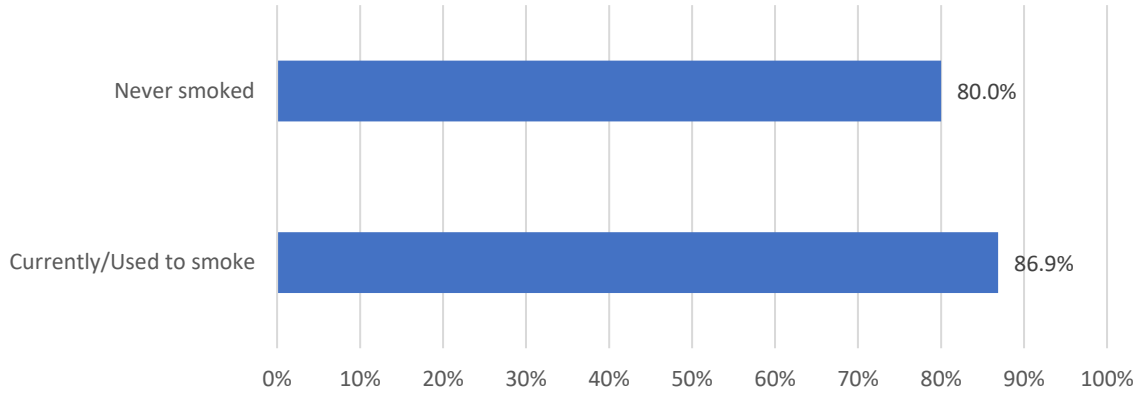


Chart 9. Percentage of respondents in Italy who agree there should be a national lung cancer screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, by smoking status



Conclusion

The 2026 findings show that, while public support for lung cancer screening in Italy remains strong, important challenges remain. More than four in ten respondents (42.1%) were unable to identify any symptoms of lung cancer, placing Italy among the countries with lower levels of symptom awareness in the survey. While this was down from 48.7% in 2023, the findings highlight the importance of continued efforts to improve awareness of the potential warning signs of lung cancer.

At the same time, stigma surrounding lung cancer remains an important issue. More than a third of respondents (35.9%) reported having less sympathy for people with lung cancer than for those with other types of cancer. While this was down from 44.3% in 2023 and below the 2026 global average of 39.2%, the findings highlight the continued importance of challenging misconceptions, blame and stigma associated with the disease.

Public support for lung cancer screening remains very strong, with 84.7% of respondents supporting a national screening programme to help people with lung cancer get diagnosed early, broadly unchanged from 85.9% in 2023. This demonstrates strong and sustained public backing for efforts to improve earlier detection and diagnosis.

Together, these findings highlight the importance of continued investment in public awareness, action to challenge stigma and misconceptions, and ongoing efforts to improve access to screening and earlier diagnosis. The GLCC will use these findings to support advocacy and awareness activities aimed at improving outcomes for everyone affected by lung cancer in Italy.

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.

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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.