

# Study finds just 18% of people who need lung cancer screening get it

June 10 2024, by Carole Tanzer Miller

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Only a fraction of Americans are getting recommended lung cancer screenings, new research shows.

While rates overall are up slightly, fewer than 1 in 5 people who are eligible for screening are up-to-date with it, according to the American Cancer Society-led study.

The society and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend a yearly computed tomography (CT) scan for people who are at high risk for [lung cancer](#). Those include current smokers between the ages of 50 and 80 as well as those who quit less than 15 years ago.

"We, clearly, still have a long way to go," said Priti Bandi, scientific director of cancer risk factors and screening surveillance research at the American Cancer Society (ACS).

She said screening is critical because lung cancer often has no symptoms in the early stages. "When diagnosed and treated early, survival is markedly improved," Bandi added in an ACS news release.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from close to 26,000 Americans who were eligible for [lung cancer screening](#). More than 61% were smokers, 54% were men and 64% were over 60. Nearly 8 in 10 were [white people](#).

Overall, 18% had been screened for lung cancer. Rates varied from state to state, with lower rates in the South, where seven states have not expanded eligibility for Medicaid.

Screening rates rose with age—from 6.7% for folks in their early 50s to 27.1% among those in their 70s.

One in 20 people who were uninsured or who didn't have a usual source of care had not been screened. Screening rates were higher in states that have expanded eligibility for Medicaid coverage.

The findings were [published](#) June 10 in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

"This research further amplifies the critical need for reducing all barriers

to access to care, to ensure people are able to immediately utilize preventive and early detection screenings at no cost," said Lisa Lacasse, president of the American Cancer Society Action Network.

"Expanding Medicaid in the 10 states that have yet to do so would significantly improve access to these lifesaving screenings and decrease lung cancer deaths, as well as eliminating patient costs for screening and follow-up tests," she added.

**More information:** Bandi et al. Lung Cancer Screening in the US, 2022. *JAMA Internal Medicine* (2024). DOI: [10.1001/jamainternmed.2024.1655](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2024.1655). [jamanetwork.com/journals/jamai.../fullarticle/2819820](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamai/fullarticle/2819820)

The American Lung Association has [an online](#) tool to help you see if you are a candidate for CT lung cancer screening.

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Citation: Study finds just 18% of people who need lung cancer screening get it (2024, June 10) retrieved 18 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-06-people-lung-cancer-screening.html>

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