



Lung cancer and mental health: Experiences reported by Europeans impacted by lung cancer

Executive Summary

Description and methodology

This report is a descriptive research analysis exploring the psychological impact of lung cancer and the mental health experiences of people impacted by the disease across Europe. Data collection was through a self-filled online survey (May 28th - July 6th, 2025). This survey was completed by 2,204 participants (1,709 people with lung cancer and 495 caregivers) from 31 WHO European Region countries.

Results

Mental health and lung cancer

Most participants (61.16%) reported a significant **negative impact on their mental health** following a lung cancer diagnosis.

The emotions most frequently reported as deeply affecting quality of life were sadness (58.54%), fear (56.49%), anxiety (56.31%), and uncertainty (55.22%). **Fear of treatment failure or cancer progression was the most common emotional difficulty**, affecting 76.71% of participants. Receiving a diagnosis was the most emotionally distressing part of the care journey (63.62%), followed by managing side effects (45.52%).

Worryingly, 43.97% reported experiencing extreme sadness, 24.68% felt trapped, and 21.16% had persistent feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness since their diagnosis.

Nine out of ten participants experienced emotional difficulties that affected their daily lives following a lung cancer diagnosis. Nearly half (46.31%) stated that emotional difficulties 'often' or 'constantly' disrupted their daily lives, especially in social life, lifestyle, finances, and work.

Mental health disorders: depression and anxiety

Among participants who had been diagnosed with depression (23.04%), 23.31% reported being diagnosed after a lung cancer diagnosis, while 43.14% had been diagnosed beforehand, however, they continued to experience this disorder afterwards. Overall, **15.16% of all participants experienced depression following a lung cancer diagnosis**. Among those without a diagnosis of depression, 15.18% perceived themselves as having this condition.

Among respondents who had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (21.24%), 29.45% reported being diagnosed after a lung cancer diagnosis, while 57.24% had pre-existing anxiety and continued to experience this disorder afterwards. Overall, **18.36% of all participants had anxiety disorder following a lung cancer diagnosis**. Among those without a diagnosis of anxiety, 15.65% perceived themselves as having an anxiety disorder.

Support and coping strategies

Maintaining a sense of normality was the most frequently cited factor influencing mental health (53.29%), followed by adopting a healthy lifestyle (49.45%) and receiving support from loved ones (45.47%).

A total of 94.08% received support from loved ones, and most participants (82.51%) were satisfied with this support. However, **65.54% felt their loved ones did not fully understand what they were going through**, 41.09% did not always have help when needed, and 26.45% 'rarely' or 'never' shared emotions with those around them.

Along the care pathway, **half of the participants were not offered any form of mental health support**, and most (65.88%) were not informed about patient organisations or support groups. Notably, 41.34% felt their healthcare team did not provide good emotional support, however, a similar percentage (39.44%) experienced emotional difficulties but did not report them.

Participants highlighted the importance of receiving more **medical information** (49.38%), **support with side effects** (43.90%), improved communication with healthcare professionals (37.59%), and enhanced access to mental health services (34.36%).

Call to action

- Healthcare systems and policymakers must recognise mental health support as a fundamental part of the lung cancer care pathway.
- Healthcare professionals must provide clear information and empower individuals to manage their disease and mental well-being.

