

Lung cancer symptom awareness: findings from a global consumer survey

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Introduction

The Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC) is an alliance of patient organisations committed to increasing awareness and understanding of lung cancer and campaigning to improve lung cancer outcomes for all. Raising awareness of lung cancer symptoms is vital because treatment is more likely to be successful if lung cancer is diagnosed early. The members of the GLCC wanted to understand levels of symptom awareness among the general public, whether this varied between member countries, and whether symptom awareness was affected by country income.

Methodology

The GLCC commissioned *Populus* to undertake an international consumer survey of symptom awareness among the public in 25 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Republic of Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA. The online poll, which was run in July 2017, included at least 1,000 adults per country and data was weighted using age, gender and region to produce a representative sample in each country. Respondents were asked to name, unprompted, as many lung cancer symptoms as they could think of. Responses were reviewed to remove any incorrectly identified symptoms. The findings for each country were cross-referenced against The World Bank classifications of income. The World Bank assigns the world's economies into four income groups — high, upper-middle, lower-middle, and low — based on gross national income per capita.

Results

The survey also found that symptom awareness is generally poor. On average, people could only correctly name one or two symptoms. There was no relationship observed between awareness of lung cancer symptoms and country income (Chart 1). Globally, four out of ten people (42%) were unable to name any symptoms of lung cancer. The most commonly named symptoms were coughing (38%), shortness of breath (35%) and coughing up of more blood, spit or phlegm (15%) (Chart 2). There was variation in symptom awareness between countries: 64% of Bulgarian respondents were unable to name a single symptom of lung cancer, compared with 21% in Great Britain and Mexico (Chart 3). Globally on average, women were slightly better than men at naming symptoms (Chart 4) and older people were slightly better than younger people at correctly naming symptoms (Chart 5). Full results can be accessed on the GLCC's website: <http://www.lungcancercoalition.org/global-polling.html>

Chart 1. Average number of lung cancer symptoms correctly identified, by country and country income

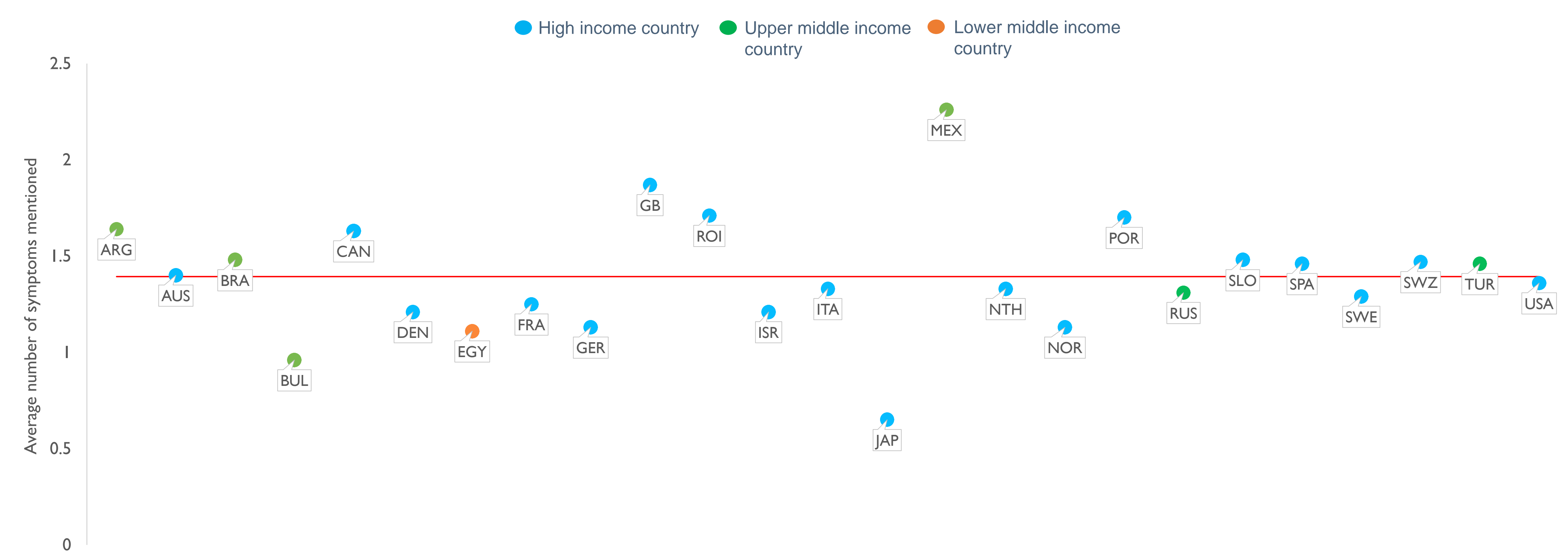


Chart 2. Globally, the most commonly named symptoms of lung cancer, by gender

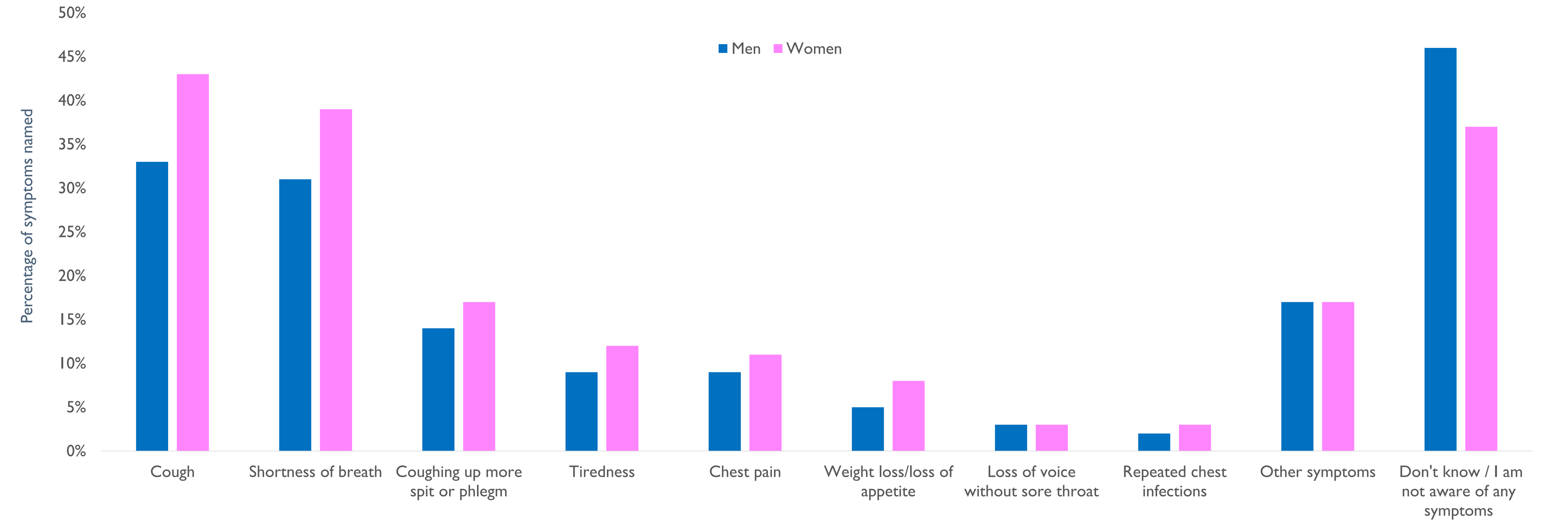


Chart 3. Proportion of global respondents who indicated they could not name any symptoms of lung cancer

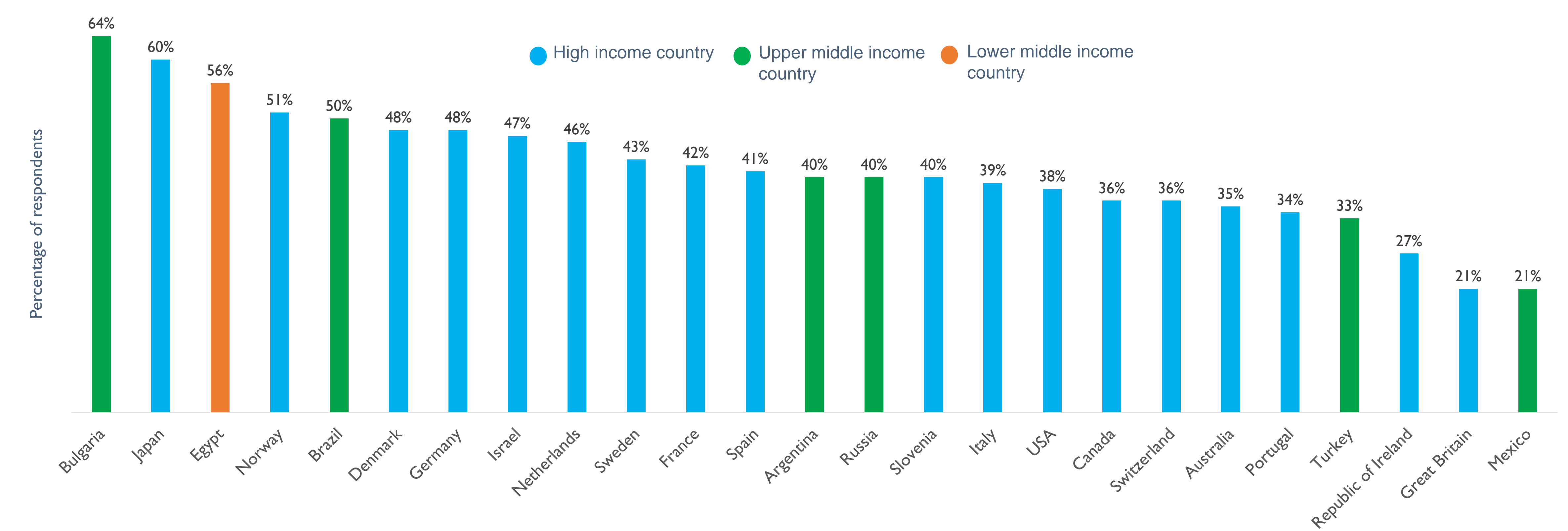


Chart 4. Average number of lung cancer symptoms correctly identified, by gender

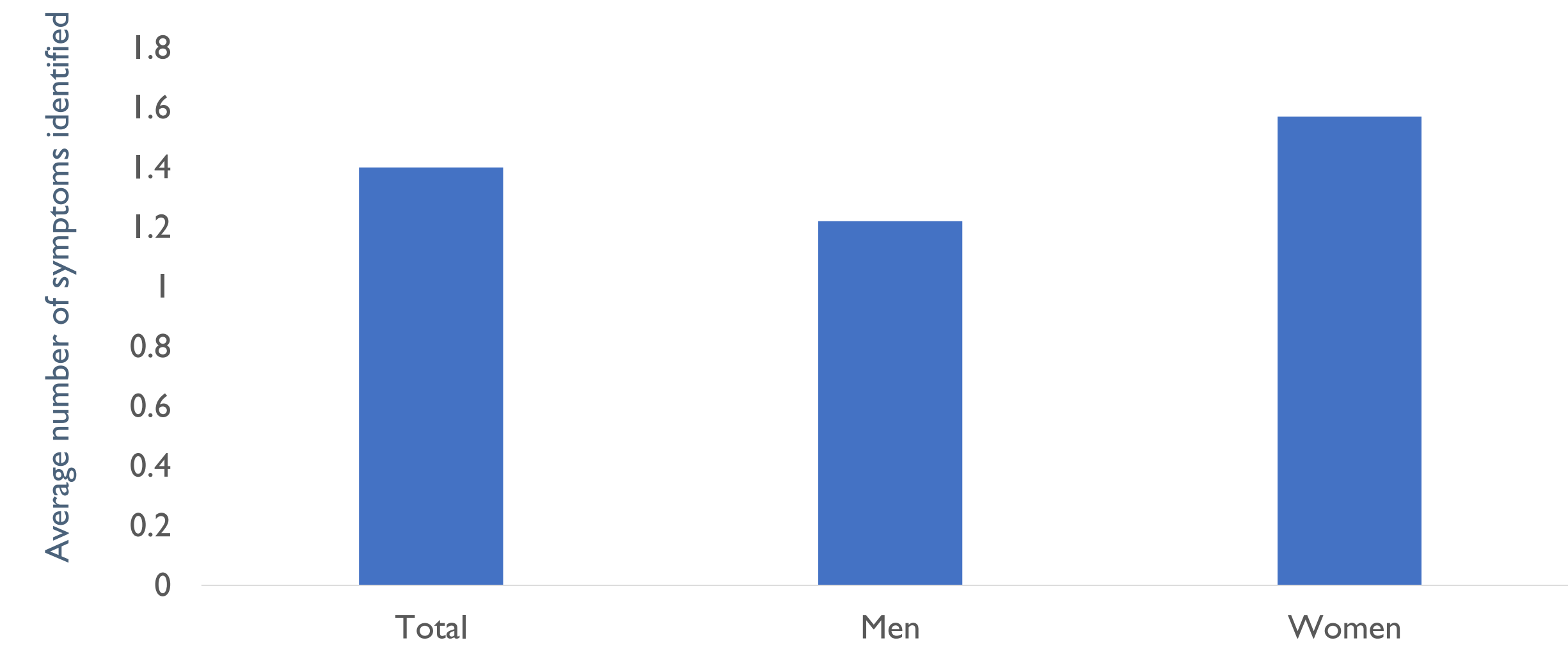
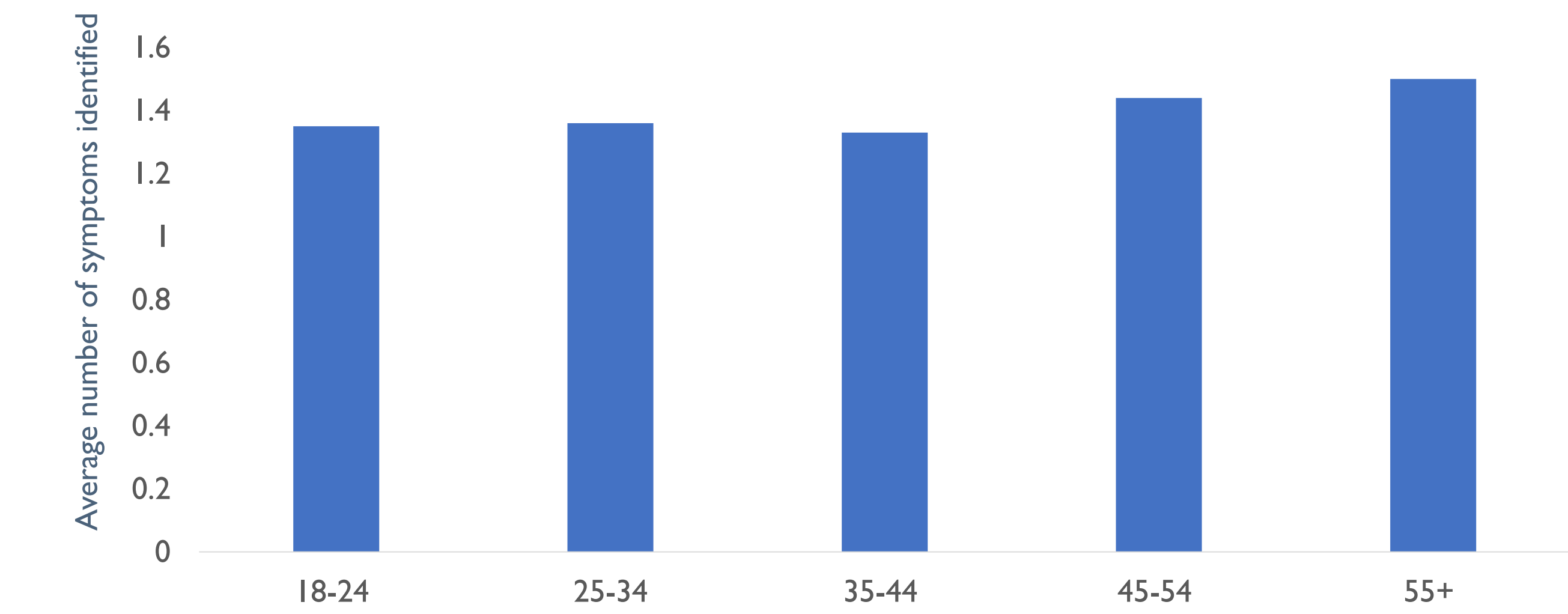


Chart 5. Average number of lung cancer symptoms correctly identified, by age



Conclusion

No country has room for complacency on lung cancer symptom awareness, irrespective of its income. More must be done to reach and educate those people who cannot name any lung cancer symptoms, to encourage symptom recognition and earlier presentation. The GLCC is calling for global action to increase recognition of lung cancer symptoms through public awareness campaigns and to improve public education and understanding around lung cancer and its causes. Approaches in countries with higher symptom awareness should be examined for lessons.

Reference 1. World Bank, New country classifications by income level: 2018-2019, January 2018