

# Overloaded, skeptical, and scared: Public perception of cancer

Cancer prevention, detection, and treatment have never been better. Simply put, we are closer to winning the war on cancer. Yet, surveys reveal that many Americans feel overloaded, skeptical, and scared. Worst of all, these negative perceptions about cancer research seem to impact behavior as citizens avoid or reject beneficial courses of action. Communication researchers are working to change these perceptions. A key first step may be recognizing the disconnect between public perception and research progress.

## Public Perception

## Research Progress

### Cancer prevention overload

### Cancer prevention recommendations

**72%**

BELIEVE THERE ARE  
**TOO MANY**  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO FOLLOW

NUMBER OF CANCER  
**PREVENTION**  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR EVERYONE:\*

**5**

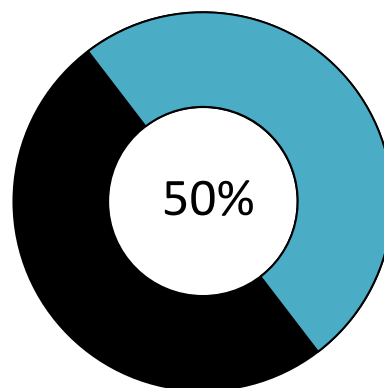
\*AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

### Skepticism about prevention

### Things you can do to lower your risk

**1 IN 5**  
BELIEVE

  
THERE'S NOT MUCH  
**YOU CAN DO**  
TO LOWER YOUR RISK



**50% of CANCER COULD**  
BE PREVENTED IF  
PEOPLE DID 5 THINGS:

- DON'T SMOKE
- EXERCISE MORE
- KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT
- GET SCREENED
- BE SUN SAFE

### Feeling that everything is a carcinogen

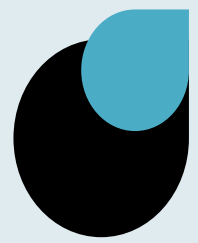
### Known or probable carcinogens

**62%**

AGREE THAT  
EVERYTHING  
SEEMS TO CAUSE  
**CANCER**

THERE ARE MORE THAN 9 MILLION  
SUBSTANCES IN THE  
WORLD, BUT ONLY

**240** CAUSE CANCER



**THESE FALSE PERCEPTIONS HURT US.**  
**WE NEED TO CHANGE OUR THINKING.**

PEOPLE WHO FEEL  
OVERLOADED  
ARE **62%**  
LESS LIKELY TO SCREEN FOR  
COLON CANCER

THOSE WHO DON'T  
SCREEN  
ARE **twice**  
AS LIKELY TO DIE FROM  
COLON CANCER



**WE CAN TAKE ACTION.**  
**WE CAN WIN THE WAR ON CANCER.**