

20 December 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan  
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

**PQ60670/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons invited by the National Screening Service to partake in BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and BowelScreen in 2019, 2020, 2021 and to date in 2022; and the percentage of invitees [who] accepted their invitation in tabular form.**

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

Ireland's three national cancer screening programmes – BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and BowelScreen – invite people to take part in screening at regular intervals from the time they become eligible for screening.

A screening test is designed for people who do not have symptoms. It aims to identify those who are at a higher risk of developing disease and provide them with diagnosis and treatment earlier than when symptoms may develop.

### BreastCheck

BreastCheck invites eligible women aged from 50 to 69 years, for breast screening on an area-by-area basis every two years. We call this process a screening 'round'. Along with many public services, BreastCheck was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was paused for several months in 2020 and 2021, and because of this, it is taking longer to get through the current screening round. Despite extra COVID-19 measures still being in place, BreastCheck is back to nearly normal numbers attending for screening daily.

The following table shows the number of persons invited by the National Screening Service (NSS) to have screening with BreastCheck in 2019, 2020, 2021, and to the end of the second quarter of 2022; and the percentage of those who were screened. Please note the programme's national target coverage rate is 70%.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of BreastCheck participants invited	234,111	77,691	197,225	89,617* (Q1 & Q2)
BreastCheck invitees screened (%)	71.6	74.4	62.4	N/A

\* *provisional data*

### CervicalCheck

CervicalCheck offers free primary HPV cervical screening every three years to women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 29; and every five years to those aged 30 to 65 years. The programme is up to date with invitations for screening, and the timeframes for result letters are within expected key performance indicators. The most recent figures show that so far this year, 94% of result letters were issued within four weeks. The Quality Assurance standard is 90%.

The following table shows the number of participants screened by CervicalCheck in 2019, 2020, 2021, and to the end of the second quarter of 2022. Please note the programme's

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national target coverage rate is 80% and the latest available figures from CervicalCheck show the five-year coverage rate (ending 31 March 2020) was 78.5%.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of CervicalCheck participants screened**	229,176	168,792	333,437	130,189* (Q1 & Q2)

\* *provisional data*

\*\* *This is the total number of persons screened by CervicalCheck - at either primary care or colposcopy. CervicalCheck does not routinely monitor tests taken versus invitation numbers in the CervicalCheck programme; a woman can attend for screening at any stage once she is eligible.*

### BowelScreen

Bowel screening is available to all people aged 60 to 69 years living in Ireland. The BowelScreen test is conducted in the person's home, with a testing kit that arrives in the post, and is returned in the post. The programme was impacted significantly by the changing COVID-19 environment and the cyber-attack, which means screening invitations are currently delayed by up to a year.

The following table shows the number of participants invited by the NSS for BowelScreen in 2019, 2020, 2021, and to the end of the second quarter of 2022; and the percentage of those who were screened. Please note the programme's national target coverage rate is 45%. It also shows the percentage of BowelScreen invitees screened.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of BowelScreen participants invited	285,083	132,472	167,493	148,720* (Q1 & Q2)
BowelScreen invitees screened (%)	43.0	42.4	49.4	N/A

\* *provisional data*

### Screening updates

We provide updates on breast, cervical and bowel screening on [www.breastcheck.ie](http://www.breastcheck.ie), [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie), and [www.bowelscreen.ie](http://www.bowelscreen.ie) respectively. People can also contact us on [info@breastcheck.ie](mailto:info@breastcheck.ie), [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie), and [info@bowelscreen.ie](mailto:info@bowelscreen.ie); or Freephone 1800 45 45 55.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy,  
Chief Executive.

