

11 March 2024

Deputy Róisín Shortall
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ9226.24: To ask the Minister for Health the number of individuals who received an invitation to take part in CervicalCheck on a quarterly basis from Q1 2016 to the end of 2023; and the absolute number and percentage of individuals who accepted an invitation and subsequently attended a screening appointment in each of the specified months, in tabular form.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

CervicalCheck offers free primary HPV cervical screening tests 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.

CervicalCheck invites women to attend for screening by booking an appointment with any registered sample taker at a time that suits them. However, women within the eligible age range do not need an invitation to attend for screening. They can check the register online and book an appointment with a registered sample taker if their screening test is due. Therefore, CervicalCheck does not report invitation data as not all people who attend for screening have received an invitation.

Your question asked for the percentage of individuals who accepted an invitation and subsequently attended an appointment per quarter since 2016. This is called the coverage rate. Coverage is defined as the proportion of unique women who have had at least one satisfactory screening test taken within the defined screening interval, expressed as a percentage of the total number of eligible women in the population.

The international standard for recording coverage in cervical screening is over five years. Recording coverage over five-year periods helps reduce anomalies that can occur in quarter-to-quarter and year-to-year figures, when a woman is invited in one quarter or year but chooses to attend in another.

The table on the following page shows the number of women who attended for screening from 2016 to 2023, and the five-year coverage rate per quarter for those years.

	Q1	% coverage	Q2	% coverage	Q3	% coverage	Q4	% coverage
2023	70,436	73.7%	56,722	73.2%	49,443	73.4%	57,450	Not available
2022	70,597	72.8%	59,592	72.9%	62,517	73.3%	55,663	73.1%
2021	88,979	72.0%	95,578	72.9%	74,972	72.8%	58,962	73.0%
2020*	39,005	78.7%	387	70.3%	34,898	70.0%	69,044	70.3%
2019	56,250	79.1%	49,190	79.1%	52,665	78.9%	48,210	79.1%
2018**	79,307	79.8%	114,447	79.8%	80,603	78.9%	64,804	78.7%
2017	79,855	79.7%	61,960	79.7%	62,169	79.9%	55,115	80.1%
2016	68,048	78.9%	64,744	79.6%	64,625	79.8%	55,674	79.6%

* In March 2020, CervicalCheck moved to primary HPV screening and extended the eligible age range from 25-60 years, to 25-65 years. This change in age range led to an immediate increase in the number of women in the population who were eligible for screening, without a corresponding rise in the number who had taken a screening test. This resulted in an immediate reduction in coverage which should adjust over the five-year period. Also, CervicalCheck was paused during April, May and June 2020 on public health advice at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

** Year women availed of the offer of a free out-of-schedule screening test.

Cervical cancer elimination

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about our work as part of the HSE's Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy Group. Ireland is on track to [eliminate cervical cancer](#) by 2040. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines elimination as fewer than four cases per 100,000 women. The current rate of cervical cancer in Ireland is around 10.4 cases per 100,000.

As part of the development of Ireland's action plan to eliminate cervical cancer, the HSE recently published an [online public consultation](#). This will enable us to hear from the public, healthcare professionals, and advocacy groups as we move forward and build an inclusive action plan.

Finally, you may be interested in our [programme reports and publications](#) that provide data about our screening programmes and information about our work in areas including quality assurance, equity in screening and research.

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

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy, Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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