

19 September 2025

Deputy Marie Sherlock
Marie.Sherlock@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ49165/25: To ask the Minister for Health the screening target for the BowelScreen Programme, and the number of individuals who have received screening between the years 2020 to 2024 and to date in 2025, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question. We regularly publish data on numbers screened in our [programme reports](#) and [activity and performance data](#). Annual screening targets are published each year in the HSE's *National Service Plan*, which is available on [hse.ie](https://www.hse.ie).

BowelScreen

BowelScreen offers free bowel screening to people aged 59 to 70 every two years. The primary objective of BowelScreen is to reduce people's risk of developing bowel cancer, by detecting and removing pre-cancerous adenomas in the lining of the bowel. If bowel cancer is found early through screening, it's easier to treat and there's a better chance of recovery.

The following table shows the number of people screened by BowelScreen from 2020 to 2024, and the first two quarters of 2025, and the screening target for each of those years.

In October 2023, we began offering BowelScreen to people aged 59 to 69, and this year, we have expanded the age range to people aged 59 to 70. As the age range expands, target screening numbers increase.

Table 3. Numbers of people screened in BowelScreen 2015-2024

	No. people screened	Target
2025	87,919*	151,000**
2024	139,758	148,000
2023	149,385	140,000
2022	125,529	140,000
2021	91,529	87,500
2020***	49,889	108,000

* Preliminary figures for January to the end of June only – subject to verification and change

** Target for all of 2025 as outlined in the HSE's [National Service Plan 2025](#)

*** Along with many public services, BowelScreen was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was paused for several months in 2020.

Our work to increase uptake

Our goal is for half of those we invite to participate in BowelScreen to complete the test. Our [BowelScreen Programme Report](#) for the years 2022-2023 shows that we had an uptake rate of 46.4%. This is similar to the uptake rate for the previous two years (2020 to 2021), and slightly below our programme target of 50%.

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The uptake rate among people who previously completed a BowelScreen home screening test is 89.2%. We know that once people have done one test they are likely to return to screening, so encouraging first-time participation is a focus of our work.

Read more about [our work to support people to choose screening](#).

Being symptom aware

We continue to emphasise the importance of being symptom aware, no matter what age you are. Information on symptoms is available on our [website](#). We encourage anyone with symptoms to contact their GP who will give them appropriate advice on follow-up care. For other queries, programme participants can call our Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55 or email: info@bowelscreen.ie.

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.

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