

Indicator 1: Participation

The percentage of women screened in a 24-month period for women aged 20 years and over and for the target age group 20–69 years.

The major objective of the National Cervical Screening Program is to reduce morbidity and deaths from cervical cancer by detecting treatable pre-cancerous lesions before their progression to cancer. Through increased participation, more women with pre-cancerous abnormalities can be detected and treated before progression to cervical cancer, thus reducing morbidity and deaths. In addition, increased participation will lead to the detection of early stage cancer, where treatment can reduce mortality, in more women.

The Program, through a variety of recruitment initiatives, focuses on women in the age group 20–69 years. The recommended screening interval for women in this target age group who have been sexually active at any stage in their lives is two years. Pap smears may cease at the age of 70 years for women who have had two normal Pap smears within the previous five years. Women over 70 years who have never had a Pap smear, or who request a Pap smear, are screened.

Some women in the target population are unlikely to require screening. They include those who have had a total hysterectomy with their cervix removed and those who have never been sexually active. Women who have previously been diagnosed with gynaecological cancer may also not be eligible for screening.

Participation rate calculations should, in principle, exclude all three groups from the data. In practice, the data are adjusted to remove women who have had a hysterectomy but the latter two groups cannot be excluded due to the lack of reliable data. Hysterectomy rates are derived from self-reported information on hysterectomies in the 2001 National Health Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The objectives and usefulness of participation as an indicator are outlined below:

- The participation indicator measures the proportion of the target population covered by the cervical screening program and the current screening policy of a two-year interval.
- The indicator is important in assessing the contribution of the cervical screening program to changes in incidence and mortality.
- The indicator can be used as a means of evaluating the effect of communication and recruitment strategies, particularly if participation rates are analysed by demographic characteristics.
- When this indicator is used in conjunction with others, it can be used to support analysis relating to target groups and screening intervals.

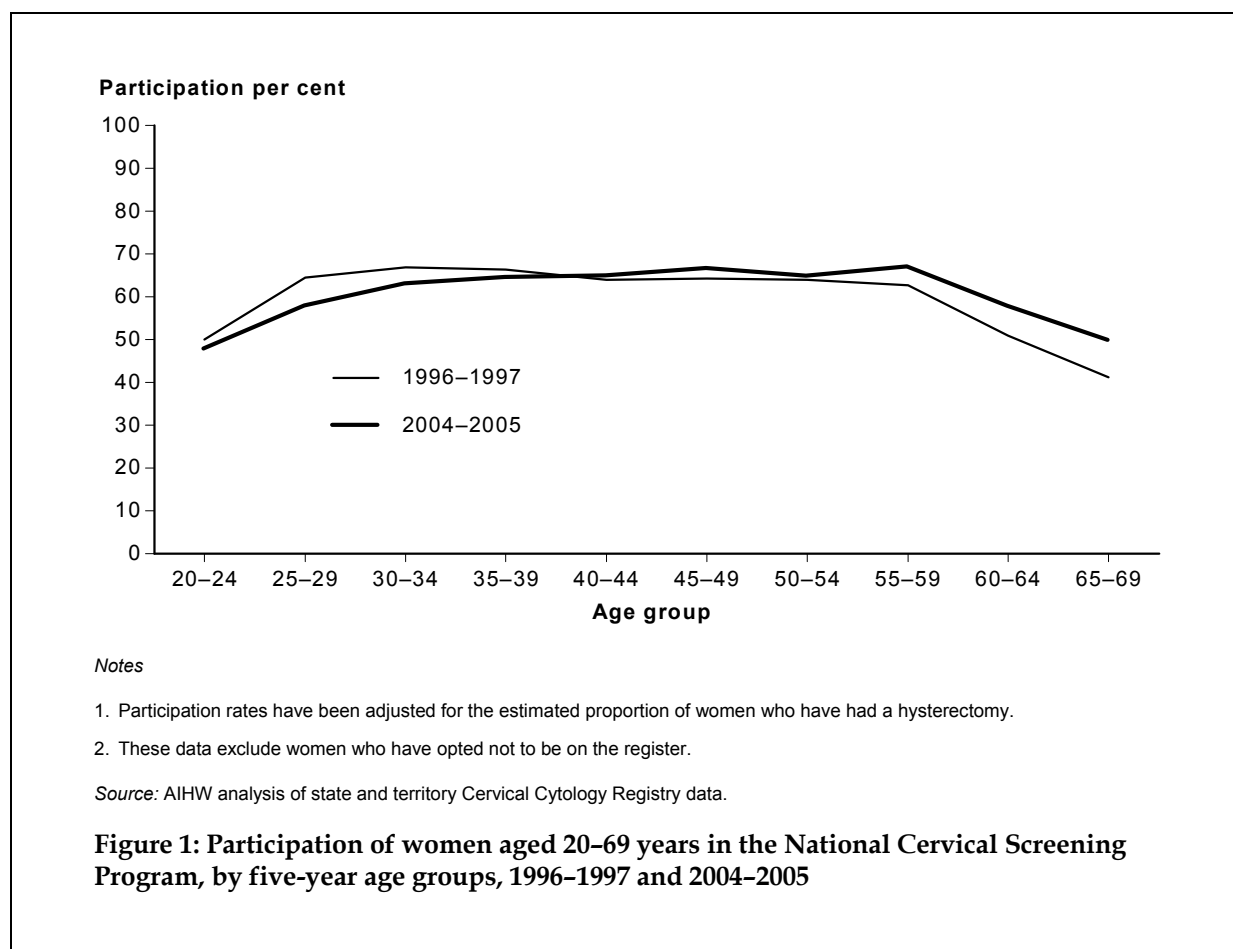
State- and territory-specific issues

Except for Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, where only women with a state- or territory-specific address are registered, the participation rates are based on all women who were screened in the particular state or territory. This may lead to an over-estimation of numbers of women screened because of double counting of some women between states. This may be the result of difficulty in identifying state of residence for women in border areas, and inclusion of women resident overseas.

Data issues

In 2001 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) carried out a full population census and a national health survey. The denominators for participation rates presented in this report have been calculated using the 2001 ABS National Health Survey hysterectomy fractions and ABS estimated resident population data, and age-adjusted using the 2001 Australian Standard Population.

Participation by age



	Age group										20–69*
	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–64	65–69	
1996–1997	50.0	64.5	66.9	66.4	64.0	64.3	64.0	62.7	50.9	41.2	61.0 (60.9–61.1)
1998–1999	53.5	65.5	68.7	68.2	66.5	66.7	64.7	65.9	56.0	46.5	63.4 (63.4–63.5)
2000–2001	50.3	61.0	64.9	64.8	64.4	65.0	63.0	64.9	55.3	46.7	61.0 (60.9–61.1)
2002–2003	49.0	59.0	63.4	63.9	64.1	65.6	63.1	66.2	56.4	48.8	60.7 (60.6–60.8)
2004–2005	47.7	57.8	62.9	64.4	64.8	66.5	64.7	66.9	57.7	49.7	61.0 (60.9–61.0)

* Age-standardised rates (standardised to the Australian 2001 population) with 95% confidence intervals.

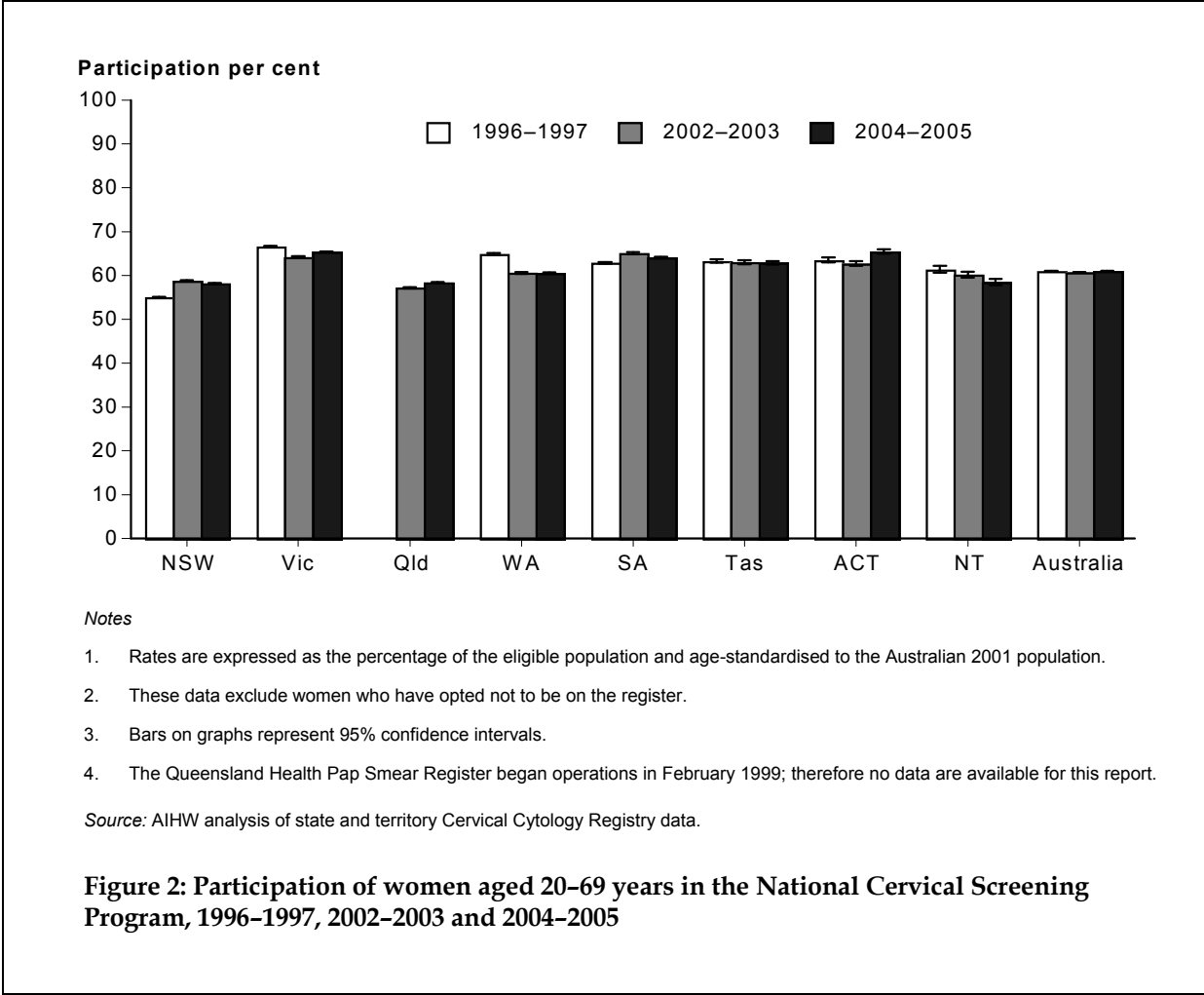
Notes

1. Periods cover 1 January 1996 to 31 December 1997 and 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2005.
2. Participation rates have been adjusted for the estimated proportion of women who have had a hysterectomy.
3. These data exclude women who have opted not to be on the register.

For more information, see Tables 1–4 beginning on page 35. Tables with data other than for the latest reporting period can be found on the AIHW's website at <www.aihw.gov.au>.

- In 2004–2005 there were 3,462,907 women who participated in the National Cervical Screening Program. Of these women, 3,407,219 (98.4%) were aged 20–69 years.
- From 1996–1997 to 2004–2005 there was a steady decline in participation among women aged less than 35 years and continued improvement in participation for women aged 40 years and over.
- Participation rates have peaked at 63.4% in 1998–1999. There was a significant decline to 60.7% in 2002–2003, followed by a statistically significant increase to 61.0% in 2004–2005.

Participation by state and territory



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Participation of women aged 20–69 years in the National Cervical Screening Program, 1996–1997 to 2004–2005

24-month period	NSW ^(b)	Vic ^(c)	Qld	WA ^(d)	SA	Tas	ACT ^{(c)(e)}	NT ^(f)	Aust
1996–1997									
AS rate	55.0	66.7	..	64.9	62.9	63.3	63.5	61.4	61.0
95% CI	54.8–55.1	66.5–66.8	..	64.7–65.1	62.7–63.2	62.8–63.7	62.9–64.0	60.6–62.2	60.9–61.1
1998–1999									
AS rate	59.4	67.7	..	63.9	66.0	64.5	65.7	62.6	63.4
95% CI	59.3–59.5	67.6–67.9	..	63.7–64.1	65.7–66.2	64.0–64.9	65.1–66.2	61.8–63.3	63.4–63.5
2000–2001									
AS rate	59.1	64.6	57.0	61.4	64.9	65.2	62.8	61.7	61.0
95% CI	59.0–59.3	64.5–64.8	56.8–57.1	61.2–61.6	64.6–65.1	64.7–65.6	62.3–63.4	61.0–62.4	60.9–61.1
2002–2003									
AS rate	58.8	64.2	57.2	60.6	65.1	63.1	62.7	60.2	60.7
95% CI	58.7–58.9	64.1–64.4	57.0–57.3	60.3–60.8	64.8–65.3	62.6–63.5	62.2–63.3	59.5–60.9	60.6–60.8
2004–2005									
AS rate	58.2	65.4	58.4	60.5	64.1	62.9	65.5	58.5	61.0
95% CI	58.1–58.3	65.3–65.5	58.3–58.6	60.3–60.7	63.9–64.4	62.5–63.3	65.0–66.0	57.9–59.2	60.9–61.0

.. Not applicable.

- (a) Age-standardised rates (standardised to the Australian 2001 population) with 95% confidence intervals.
- (b) The New South Wales Pap Test Register commenced in July 1996, therefore data have been estimated for the period January to July 1996.
- (c) In the 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 reporting periods the Victorian and Australian Capital Territory registries only registered women with a Victorian or Australian Capital Territory address respectively.
- (d) From 1998–1999 to 2000–2001 the Western Australia registry only registered women with a Western Australian address.
- (e) Since the National Cervical Screening Program commenced, the Australian Capital Territory has only registered women with an Australian Capital Territory address.
- (f) The Northern Territory Pap Smear Register commenced in March 1996, therefore data have been estimated for the period January to March 1996.

Notes

- Rates are expressed as the percentage of the eligible female population and age-standardised to the Australian 2001 population.
 - The Queensland Health Pap Smear Register began operations in February 1999; therefore no data are available for this report.
- In 2004–2005 there were significant declines in participation in New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, and significant increases in Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.
 - The highest rates of participation were in Victoria (65.4%) and the Australian Capital Territory (65.5%) in 2004–2005 and the lowest in New South Wales (58.2%) and Queensland (58.4%).

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