Summary

Data updates
This report presents the latest available activity and participation data for the 3 cancer screening programs:

- **Activity data** are presented to March 2021 for cervical and bowel cancer screening (breast cancer screening activity data are not available). Activity data are updated quarterly and were last updated on this page in June 2021.
- **Participation data** are presented to 2018–2019 for all 3 programs. Participation data for cervical and breast cancer screening were last updated in December 2020 and participation data for bowel cancer screening were last updated on this page in June 2021.

What are Australia’s cancer screening programs?
Cancer is one of the leading causes of illness and death in Australia. Some cancers can be detected through screening, which allows for early detection, intervention and treatment.

Australia has 3 national cancer screening programs:
- BreastScreen Australia
- National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP)
- National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP).

These programs offer a screening test to people in defined target groups to test for signs of cancer or pre-cancerous conditions.

How do we measure the use of cancer screening programs?
Two key measures of the use of cancer screening programs in this report are **activity** and **participation**.

Activity
Activity data are counts of events, such as the number of screening tests conducted.

Activity data show the volume of work undertaken by the cancer screening programs.

Activity data can be made available quickly, which means recent trends can be identified. Knowing how many tests are conducted helps services and policy makers understand demand and plan for the future.

Activity data count events rather than people. A person may be counted more than once if they complete more than one screening test during the time period.

Participation
Participation is the proportion of eligible or invited people who completed a screening test.

Participation data help us to know the extent to which target groups are being reached, and can inform strategies to improve screening rates among these groups of people.

Participation is usually measured over a longer period of time than activity data (2 years or 5 years, in line with the recommended screening interval for each program), so the results take more time to become available.

Each person is counted only once for each program.

High rates of participation produce the greatest population benefits in terms of reducing illness and death from these cancers (see the AIHW report [Analysis of cancer outcomes and screening behaviour for national cancer screening programs in Australia](https://www.aihw.gov.au/cancer/cancer-outcomes/analysis-of-cancer-outcomes-andcreening-behaviour-for-national-cancer-screening-programs-in-australia)).

Activity: latest results
Bowel cancer screening (NBCSP):

- 602,000 invitations to participate were made in the NBCSP in the March quarter 2021.
- 243,000 bowel screening kits were returned in the March quarter 2021.
Cervical screening (NCSP):

- 127,000 cervical screening tests were performed in the March quarter 2021.
- 40,000 of these tests were performed in January 2021; 46,000 in February and 41,000 in March.

Note that activity data are counts of events rather than people.

Activity data for BreastScreen Australia are not presented as data are not available.

For information about the impact of COVID-19 on Australia’s cancer screening programs in 2020, see the AIHW report Cancer screening and COVID-19 in Australia.

Participation: latest results

Bowel cancer screening (NBCSP):

- Almost 2.5 million of the 5.7 million people aged 50–74 who were invited to screen in 2018–2019 participated.
- This was a participation rate of 43.5%.
- Participation was higher among women (45.6% of all women invited) than men (41.3%).

BreastScreen Australia:

- This was a participation rate of 55%.

Cervical screening (NCSP):

- This was a participation rate of 46%. This is an estimate of program participation, due to the fact that only 2 years of data are available.
- Participation in the new 5-year program cannot be accurately reported until there are 5 years of data available (2018–2022).

What is included in this report?

This report includes the latest available activity and participation data for the 3 cancer screening programs, as outlined below. Data in this report will be updated quarterly.

Activity data:

- activity data up to and including the March quarter 2021 for cervical and bowel cancer screening are included
- breast cancer screening activity data are not available.

Participation data:

- participation data up to and including the 2-year period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019 (2018–2019) for all 3 programs are included
- breast cancer screening participation data for 2018–2019 are preliminary and subject to change (see ‘Data updates’ box below for details)
- bowel cancer screening participation data for 2018–2019 have been updated (for more information, see the box ‘Updates to bowel cancer screening participation data 2018–2019’ box in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Participation section).

Data updates

Data in this report are sourced from live databases, which are updated over time, with later data supply likely to have a greater level of completeness. Data in this report may differ from other AIHW cancer screening reports, which are sourced at a different time.

Activity data for cervical and bowel cancer screening are updated each quarter.

Preliminary participation data for cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening are published ahead of the respective AIHW annual monitoring report for each program to give key stakeholders and policy-makers early access to these important data. As more recent data are used to update participation when the respective AIHW annual monitoring reports are released, preliminary participation data are subject to change.

In this report, screening activity data are presented by month and quarter. Each quarter covers 3 months of the year and is identified with reference to the last month in the quarter (for example, the March quarter comprises January, February, and March).

Participation by geography is also presented. Exploring the results across different geographical areas can help to identify where resources are needed to improve equity, accessibility and participation in cancer screening programs.

What are the other ways of measuring cancer screening program performance?

Participation is one of many indicators used to evaluate the performance of Australia’s national cancer screening programs against their aims.

The full set of performance indicators are reported in each program's annual monitoring reports, available from the AIHW’s cancer screening reports page.
The activity data presented in this report complement performance indicator reporting.
National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

What is the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program?
The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) aims to reduce morbidity and mortality from bowel cancer by screening the eligible target population for early detection or prevention of the disease.

Eligible Australians (those aged 50-74) are sent a free screening kit (immunochemical faecal occult blood test or iFOBT) and are invited to screen every 2 years.

To participate, people complete the screening test, and post it to the pathology laboratory for analysis.

This program began in 2006, offering screening to people aged 55 and 65, and was subsequently expanded to include other ages. In 2014, the Australian Government announced that the program would be expanded to offer free 2-yearly screening for all Australians aged 50-74. The expansion was completed in 2020.

For the latest monitoring report for the NBCSP that includes data from the National Cancer Screening Register, see the AIHW report National Bowel Cancer Screening Program: monitoring report 2021.

Explore the latest participation and activity data on the following pages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of bowel cancer screening invitations sent out during a given period, and the number of completed test kits returned for analysis.</td>
<td>The proportion of those invited who returned a completed screening test during the specified period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

602,000 invitations were sent out and 243,000 bowel cancer screening kits were returned in the March quarter 2021.

43.5% of people aged 50-74 who were invited participated in bowel cancer screening in 2018-2019.

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National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

Activity
Bowel cancer screening activity data
For the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP), activity data are available on:

- the number of invitations sent out during a given period, and
- the number of completed screening test kits returned for analysis.

Activity data provides insight into the volume of work carried out by screening programs, along with recent trends and seasonal variation. Activity data can be collected and published quickly.

Note that activity data are counts of events rather than people.

Explore the latest data in the visualisation below.

How many invitations were made?
In the March quarter 2021:

- 602,000 invitations to participate in the screening program were sent to eligible people aged 50-74
- the number of invitations made to women (294,000) and men (308,000) were similar.

Between the March quarter 2014 and the March quarter 2021, the number of invitations fluctuated across quarters and years, with a peak of 1,251,000 invitations in the June quarter 2020.

The increased number of NBCSP invites and kits returned since the March quarter 2014 reflects the staged roll-out of the NBCSP. Over subsequent years, additional age groups were invited to screen, and the program was fully rolled out (with all age groups included) in 2020. See the ‘National Bowel Cancer Screening Program age groups invited by year’ section of the Technical notes for more information.

Lower numbers of invitations during hotter times of the year may reflect the NBCSP Hot-zone policy, where in some locations invitations are scheduled to be sent in cooler times of the year (Department of Health 2017). This affects some locations more than others.

For more information about the impact of COVID-19 on Australia’s cancer screening programs in 2020, see the AIHW report Cancer screening and COVID-19 in Australia.

How many bowel cancer screening kits were returned?
In the March quarter 2021:

- 243,000 completed screening kits were returned for analysis
- 52% of kits returned were for women.

The number of completed kits returned was lower in the March quarter 2021 (243,000) than the December quarter 2020 (396,000).

This data visualisation shows monthly national activity data for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, from January 2014 to March 2021. The column graph shows the number of screening tests by year and can be filtered by measure (invitations made and kits returned), year, quarter, month and sex (males/females and persons). The second tab shows the activity data in table form, and can be filtered by measure, year, quarter and month.
References

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National Bowel Cancer Screening Program

Participation

Bowel cancer screening participation data

For the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP), participation refers to the proportion of those invited who returned a completed a screening test during the specified period.

Participation data help us to know the extent to which target groups are being reached, and are usually measured over a longer period of time than activity data.

Participation in the NBCSP is measured over 2 calendar years to align with the 2-year recommended screening interval. Participation rates are calculated using an additional 6 months of data after the end of the 2-year invitation period, to allow time for all invitees to complete and return their screening kit.

Updates to bowel cancer screening participation data 2018–2019

Bowel cancer screening participation data in this report are sourced from a live database, which is updated over time, with later data supply likely to have a greater level of completeness. Data in this report may differ from other AIHW cancer screening reports, which are sourced at a different time.

Preliminary participation data for bowel cancer screening are published ahead of the AIHW annual monitoring report to give key stakeholders and policy-makers early access to these important data. As more recent data are used to update participation when the AIHW annual monitoring report is released, preliminary participation data are subject to change. Preliminary bowel cancer screening participation data for 2018–2019 were first published in December 2020, and have been updated in this release, aligning with data published in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program: monitoring report 2021. This has led to a small change in some results.

Data in this section are presented to one decimal place in this release.

Explore the latest data in the visualisations below.

How many people participated in bowel cancer screening?

In 2018–2019:

- 5.7 million people aged 50–74 were invited to participate in the NBCSP
- almost 2.5 million people returned a completed screening test
- this was a national participation rate of 43.5%.

Does participation vary by sex, age and state/territory?

In 2018–2019:

- women had a higher participation rate than men (45.6% compared with 41.3%)
- participation rates were highest in South Australia and Tasmania (48.9%)
- participation rates were highest for people aged 70–74 in all jurisdictions.

Has participation changed over time?

The national participation rate has increased from 38.9% of invited people aged 50–74 in 2014–2015 to 43.5% in 2018–2019. It should be noted there have been changes in the target ages invited over this period (see Technical notes for details).

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019. The bar graph shows participation by age group and can be filtered by state/territory, sex (males/females and persons) and year. The line graph found on the second tab shows trend data by type of measure (number of invitees, number of participants and participation rate), state/territory, sex and age group. A third tab shows the participation data in a table form and can be filtered by measure and state/territory.
How does participation vary by Primary Health Network?

Primary Health Network (PHN) areas are 31 areas covering Australia, as defined by the Department of Health.

In 2018–2019:

- Gippsland had the highest participation rate among PHN areas (50.7%)
- The Northern Territory had the lowest participation rate (28.4%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, by Primary Health Network. The map can be filtered by state/territory and year and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by year and shows the participation rate of each Primary Health Network for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Primary Health Network in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of invitees, number of participants and participation rate) and state/territory.
How does participation vary by Statistical Area Level 3?

Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3) consists of 333 geographical areas covering Australia, defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In 2018–2019:

- Yorke Peninsula Island had the highest participation rate among SA3s (57.0%)
- Katherine had the lowest participation rate (10.7%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, by Statistical Area Level 3. The map can be filtered by state/territory and year and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by state/territory and year and shows the participation rate of each Statistical Area Level 3 for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Statistical Area Level 3 in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of invitees, number of participants and participation rate), state/territory and year.
BreastScreen Australia

What is BreastScreen Australia?
BreastScreen Australia aims to reduce illness and death from breast cancer using screening mammography for early detection of unsuspected breast cancer in women.

Early detection provides an opportunity for early treatment, which can reduce illness and death.

Australian women aged 40 and over are eligible for free mammograms with BreastScreen Australia every 2 years, with women aged 50–74 actively targeted to participate in the program.

This program began in 1991, targeting women aged 50-69. From 1 July 2013, women aged 70-74 were added to the target group. This change was phased in over several years, and fully implemented by 2016-17.

For the latest monitoring report for BreastScreen Australia that includes BreastScreen data, see the AIHW report BreastScreen Australia monitoring report 2020.

Note: Activity data for BreastScreen Australia are not presented as data are not available.

BreastScreen Australia participation data
For BreastScreen Australia, participation refers to the proportion of women aged 50–74 who are screened in a 2-year period.

Participation data help us to know the extent to which target groups are being reached.

Participation in BreastScreen Australia is measured over 2 calendar years to align with the 2-year recommended screening interval.

Explore the latest data in the visualisations below.

How many women participated in BreastScreen Australia?
In 2018–2019:

- almost 1.9 million women aged 50–74 participated in BreastScreen Australia
- this was a participation rate of 55%.

Note that BreastScreen Australia participation data for 2018–2019 are preliminary and subject to revision. For more information, see the Technical notes.

Does participation vary by age and state/territory?
In 2018–2019:

- participation among women aged 50–74 was highest in Tasmania (60%, age-standardised rate)
- women aged 65–69 had the highest participation rate in all states and territories.

Has participation changed over time?
The number of women aged 50–74 who participated in BreastScreen Australia increased in recent years, from 1.7 million in 2014–2015 to almost 1.9 million in 2018–2019.


This data visualisation shows participation data for BreastScreen Australia from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019. The bar graph shows participation by age group and can be filtered by state/territory and year. The line graph on the second tab shows trend data by type of measure (number of participants, eligible population and participation rate), state/territory, and age group. A third tab shows the participation data in a table form and can be filtered by measure, state/territory and age group.
How does participation vary by Primary Health Network?

Primary Health Network (PHN) areas are 31 areas covering Australia, as defined by the Department of Health.

In 2018-2019:

- Murrumbidgee had the highest participation rate among PHN areas (61%)
- Northern Territory had the lowest participation rate (38%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for BreastScreen Australia, by Primary Health Network. The map can be filtered by state/territory and year and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by age group and year and shows the participation rate of each Primary Health Network for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Primary Health Network in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of participants, eligible population and participation rate), state/territory and age group.
How does participation vary by Statistical Area Level 3?

Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3) consists of 333 geographical areas covering Australia, defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In 2018–2019:

- Tamworth - Gunnedah had the highest participation rate among SA3s (68%)
- East Pilbara had the lowest participation rate (30%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for BreastScreen Australia, by Statistical Area Level 3. The map can be filtered by state/territory and year and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by state/territory, age group and year, and shows the participation rate of each Statistical Area Level 3 for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Statistical Area Level 3 in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of participants, eligible population and participation rate), state/territory and year.
BreastScreen participation rates for women aged 50–74 by SA3

Select state/territory: Australia
Select year: 2018–2019

Participation rate for Australia: 48.8% (2018–2019)

SA3 with the highest participation rate was Tamworth - Gunnedah: 68.3% (2018–2019)

SA3 with the lowest participation rate was East Pilbara: 29.5% (2018–2019)

Search for an area on the map below or hover over an area for more information.

Australia, 2018–2019

© 2021 MapBox © OpenStreetMap

View data notes and tables
Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
http://www.aihw.gov.au

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National Cervical Screening Program

What is the National Cervical Screening Program?
The National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP) aims to reduce cervical cancer cases, illness and deaths in Australia.

The NCSP began in 1991 and originally targeted women aged 20-69 for a 2-yearly Papanicolaou (Pap) smear, or ‘Pap test’ to detect precancerous abnormalities of the cervix.

From 1 December 2017, the NCSP changed to 5-yearly cervical screening for women aged 25-74, using a primary human papillomavirus (HPV) test with partial HPV genotyping and reflex liquid-based cytology triage (‘Cervical Screening Test’).

Data in this report are for women aged 25-74 screened under the renewed screening program.

For the latest monitoring report for the NCSP that includes data from the National Cancer Screening Register, see the AIHW report National Cervical Screening Program monitoring report 2020.

Explore the latest activity and participation data on the following pages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of cervical screening tests performed within the specified time period.</td>
<td>The number of people aged 25-74 screened in a 5-year period as a percentage of females in the population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127,000 cervical screening tests were performed for people aged 25-74 in the March quarter 2021.</td>
<td>46% of eligible people aged 25-74 participated in cervical screening in 2018-2019 (estimated 2-year participation rate).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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National Cervical Screening Program

Activity

Cervical screening activity data

For the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP), activity data are available on the number of screening tests performed within a specified time period.

Activity data provides insight into the volume of work carried out by screening programs, along with recent trends and seasonal variation. Activity data can be collected and published quickly.

Explore the latest data in the visualisation below.

How many screening tests were performed?

In the March quarter 2021:

- 127,000 screening tests were performed for people aged 25-74
- 40,000 of these tests were performed in January 2021; 46,000 in February and 41,000 in March.

The number of screening tests performed in 2020 was expected to be lower than in 2019. This is largely due to the program changing from 2-yearly Pap tests to 5-yearly Cervical Screening Tests from December 2017. Most people who had screened under the previous program were due for their first HPV test 2 years after their last Pap test (during the years 2018 and 2019). Screening in 2020 is mainly comprised of people overdue for their first HPV test and those newly-screening.

The impact of COVID-19 cannot be quantified without further years of data. For more information about the impact of COVID-19 on Australia’s cancer screening programs in 2020, see the AIHW report *Cancer screening and COVID-19 in Australia*.

This data visualisation shows monthly national activity data for the National Cervical Screening Program, from January 2018 to March 2021. The column graph showing the number of screening tests by year can be filtered by year, quarter, and month. The second tab shows the activity data in a table form and can be filtered by year, quarter and month.

Visualisation not available for printing
National Cervical Screening Program

Participation

Cervical screening participation data

For the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP), participation refers to the number of people aged 25-74 screened in a 5-year period as a percentage of females in the population.

For the 2018-2019 period, participation is defined as the number of people who had a screening HPV test (primary screening or 12-month repeat HPV tests). This is a change from previous AIHW reports in which participation was defined as the number of people who had an HPV test for any reason. This means participation is lower than, and not comparable to, previous reports.

Participation data help us to know the extent to which target groups are being reached, and are usually measured over a longer period of time than activity data.

From 1 December 2017, the NCSP changed to 5-yearly cervical screening, for those aged 25-74. Participation is therefore measured over 5 calendar years to align with the recommended screening interval.

Participation in the new 5-year program cannot be properly reported until there are 5 years of data available. In the interim, preliminary estimates have been calculated, including a 2-year estimate of participation for 2018-2019.

Explore the latest data in the visualisations below.

How many people participated in cervical screening?

In 2018-2019:
- 3.1 million people aged 25-74 had a cervical screening test
- this was an estimated two-year participation rate of 46%.

Does participation vary by age and state/territory?

In 2018-2019:
- people aged 55-59 and 60-64 had the highest participation rate (52%)
- people aged 70-74 had the lowest participation rate (23%)
- South Australia had the highest participation rate among the states and territories, for people aged 25-74 (51% age-standardised rate).

Note that lower participation rates are expected among people aged 70-74 as they have re-entered the target age group under the renewed NCSP, after leaving the previous program after age 69.

Has participation changed over time?

The national age-standardised estimated participation rate was 48% in 2018 and 47% in 2018-2019.

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Cervical Screening Program for 2018 and 2018-2019. The bar graph shows participation by age group and can be filtered by state/territory and year. The line graph on the second tab shows trend data by type of measure (number of participants and participation rate), state/territory, and age group. A third tab shows the participation data in a table form and can be filtered by measure and state/territory.

Visualisation not available for printing

How does participation vary by Primary Health Network?

Primary Health Network (PHN) areas are 31 areas covering Australia, as defined by the Department of Health.

In 2018-2019:
- Adelaide had the highest participation rate among PHN areas (51%)
- Western Sydney had the lowest participation rate (39%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Cervical Screening Program, by Primary Health Network. The map can be filtered by state/territory and year, and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by age group and year and shows the participation rate of each Primary Health Network for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Primary Health Network in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of participants, eligible population and participation rate), state/territory and age group.
How does participation vary by Statistical Area Level 3?

Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3) consists of 333 geographical areas covering Australia, defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In 2018-2019:
- Barwon - West had the highest participation rate among SA3 areas (61%)
- East Pilbara had the lowest participation rate (31%).

This data visualisation shows participation data for the National Cervical Screening Program, by Statistical Area Level 3. The map can be filtered by state/territory, year and age group, and uses shaded areas of colour to show participation rates. The bar graph on the second tab can be filtered by state/territory, age group and year and shows the participation rate of each Statistical Area Level 3 for the selected period. A third tab shows the participation data by Statistical Area Level 3 in a table form and can be filtered by measure (number of participants, eligible population and participation rate), state/territory and age group.
Using the data - FAQs

How do I download data from visualisations?

All of the data visualisations have been created using Tableau. You can use the filters to see the data of interest to you.

To view the underlying data, click on the ‘View data notes and tables’ link at the bottom of each visualisation to download an Excel file (.xlsx format) containing the data, or go to the Data page.

How do I print the pages?

You can print the web report using the ‘Generated PDF’ button near the top of the page, if this is available.

You also can print pages by pressing Ctrl and P on your keyboard (at the same time), or by heading to File at the top of your browser and selecting print. Note that the Tableau visualisations do not print correctly with this method.

To print a visualisation, select ‘Download’ on the menu below the visualisation and choose to download as an image or PDF. The visualisation prints what is presented on the screen, with your selected filters.

You can also use the Snipping Tool to capture what is on your screen.

How do I interact with the graphs and maps?

The graphs, maps and figures have been developed in Tableau. To see the data of interest, hover your mouse over the graph, map or figure to display the tooltip—your cursor will change to a hand selector. The tooltip displays the underlying data.

You can also download the underlying data into an Excel file. Click on the link at the bottom of the page that is displaying the graph of interest.

Some visualisations have an interactive legend, hover your mouse over the legend and a small selector icon will appear (it looks like a highlighter). Click on this icon and then click on the specific element of interest.

You can filter the data on some graphs, maps or figures. Filters are displayed as a button, tick box or a drop down list; select the data of interest to see it displayed.

If you want to clear your selections and return the graph, map or figure to its original appearance, click on the 'revert' button at the bottom.

When you position your cursor over a Tableau map, a search option will appear in the top left, type a location name to zoom to that area on the map. Click on the home button to return to the map’s default view.

Please note that Tableau is not compatible with versions of Internet Explorer below version 11.

Where does the information come from?

This report uses data from:

- the National Cancer Screening Register for bowel and cervical screening data
- the National Bowel Cancer Screening Register, for participation data for reporting periods prior to 2018-2019
- state and territory cervical screening registers, for reporting periods prior to 2018
- state and territory BreastScreen Australia registers.

Please visit the Technical notes section for more information.

I want to do my own data analysis, where can I get more data?

The information in this report is free to download, but must be used in accordance with our data use policy. Most information released by AIHW is made available under a Creative Commons BY 3.0 licence.

For more information see copyright at AIHW.

Tableau allows you the freedom to view and manipulate a selection of data. If you require data not currently available here, please:

- email screeninganalysismonitoring@aihw.gov.au for questions regarding cancer screening
- email cancer@aihw.gov.au for questions regarding cancer, or
- submit a data request and we will contact you.
Should you wish to request additional data, the AIHW generally charges for data requests at an hourly rate on a cost-recovery basis. The minimum charge is $300 plus GST for each request.

Where can I get help?

If you need help using our interactive visualisations (maps, graphs and figures), or help downloading data, you can contact us at screeninganalysismonitoring@aihw.gov.au.

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Technical notes

Activity data

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program
Invitations issued are a count of all screening invitations issued within the relevant period, for those within the target age group. Two-yearly screening was only fully rolled out from 2020, and prior to that specific ages invited within the 50-74 were invited to screen each year. This phasing in of age groups is also reflected in quarterly activity counts. The age groups invited for the periods covered in this report are shown in the section NBCSP age groups invited by year.

Total kits returned are a count of all kits returned during the relevant period. This can include kits issued in a previous period and returned at a later date. It can also include multiple kits per person (invitee) due to expired, spoiled, damaged, or incorrectly completed kits.

Although terminology is similar, activity counts of invites issued or screening kits returned should not be directly compared with the formal NBCSP participation indicator. Activity counts are a count of events, not people.

National Cervical Screening Program
Screening tests are a count of all primary HPV screening tests performed within the relevant period for those within the target age group. Follow-up tests for people who had a positive screening test, or treatment for HPV infection, are not included. Transition from the previous two-yearly screening program to the renewed 5-yearly screening program occurred from 1 December 2017. Quarterly activity counts are only shown for the renewed NCSP from 2018 onwards as program data for previous years are not comparable.

Although terminology is similar, activity counts of screening tests should not be directly compared with the formal NCSP participation indicator. Activity counts are a count of events, not people.

BreastScreen Australia
Activity data for BreastScreen Australia are not presented as data are not available.

Age-specific rates
The number of cases occurring in each specified age group divided by the corresponding population in the same age group. For example, in this report age-specific participation rates are calculated as the number of people participating in a screening program, divided by the number of people eligible to participate (or the number of people in the population of that age), expressed as a percentage.

Age-standardised rates
Age-standardisation is a way to remove the influence of age when comparing populations with different age structures (or relative number of people in each age group in a population). This is usually necessary because the rates of many diseases vary strongly (usually increasing) with age. The age structures of the different populations are converted to the same ‘standard’ structure, and then the disease rates that would have occurred with that structure are calculated and compared.

In this report, all rates reported (including national rates reported for a single reporting period) are age-specific (crude) rates, unless otherwise stated. Age-standardised participation rates for the target age group for BreastScreen Australia (50-69 and 50-74) and the National Cervical Screening Program (25-74) are available in the accompanying data tables, to allow comparisons to be made over time and across population groups.

Age-standardised participation rates are not available for the National Bowel Cancer Screening program, due to the fact that only specific age groups were invited until the program was fully rolled out in 2020. For more information about the age groups invited in different years, see the section in the Technical notes, ‘National Bowel Cancer Screening Program age groups invited by year’.

Data sources
This report uses data from:
- the National Cancer Screening Register for bowel and cervical screening data
- the National Bowel Cancer Screening Register, for participation data for reporting periods prior to 2018-2019
- state and territory cervical screening registers, for reporting periods prior to 2018
- state and territory BreastScreen Australia registers.

Data updates
Data in this report are sourced from live databases, which are updated over time, with later data supply likely to have a greater level of completeness. Data in this report may differ from other AIHW cancer screening reports, which are sourced at a different time.

Activity data for cervical and bowel cancer screening are updated each quarter.
Preliminary participation data for cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening are published ahead of the respective AIHW annual monitoring report for each program to give key stakeholders and policy-makers early access to these important data. As more recent data are used to update participation when the respective AIHW annual monitoring reports are released, preliminary participation data are subject to change.

Geography
Participation rates in BreastScreen Australia, the NBCSP and the NCSP are presented for the following geographies:

- Primary Health Network (PHN) areas: 31 areas covering Australia, defined by the Department of Health (Department of Health 2018).
- Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3s): 333 areas covering Australia.

Participation rates in the NBCSP are also presented for Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s): 2,196 areas covering Australia (for periods up to 2017-2018). SA2 data for the NBCSP were not available for 2018-2019 at the time of preparation of this report.

Both SA3s and SA2 are defined by the ABS within the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS):

- The 2011 ASGS was used for the NBCSP, and 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 BreastScreen Australia data in this report.
- The 2016 ASGS was used for the NCSP and 2016-2017 and later BreastScreen Australia data in this report.

For BreastScreen Australia and the NCSP, population denominators for the PHN geographical areas were derived using ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by postal areas (ABS 2020) and the PHN correspondence file. These data were classified according to the PHN 2017 structure (ABS 2016).

Participation data for some SA3s across the three screening programs were not published due to reliability concerns arising from low numbers in these regions and/or due to poor correspondence (as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Assigning geography
For NBCSP invitees, geographic areas (PHN areas, SA3s and SA2s) were assigned using Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) of usual residence. For invitees without reliable SA1 details geographic areas were assigned using postcode of usual residence. As some postcodes cross the boundaries of PHNs, SA3s or SA2s the use of postcode correspondences may lead to some minor inaccuracies in results. For the 2018-2019 reporting period, participation by PHN and SA3 geographical areas were reported and assigned using postcode of usual residence.

Where SA1 codes and postcodes could not be attributed to a PHN, SA3 or SA2, these invitees were included in an 'Unknown' group in the data tables, and are excluded from data visualisations.

For BreastScreen Australia and the NCSP, PHN areas and SA3s were assigned using postcode of usual residence. Where postcodes could not be attributed to a PHN or SA3, these women were included in an 'Unknown' group, where possible in the data tables, and were excluded from data visualisations. For analyses where a postcode or SA1 boundary overlapped PHN areas, SA3 or SA2 boundaries, the relevant records were attributed based on the percentage of the population within that postcode or SA1 that fell within the PHN area SA3, or SA2.

Participation by geographic areas represents the geographic data available within the relevant data source at the time of first publication, and are not retrospectively updated. This is particularly of relevance to NCSR data for the NBCSP as some improvements to geographical information may be made over time.

Correspondences
Correspondence files for PHN were sourced from the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 3 - Non ABS Structures (ABS 2010b, 2016b). For the NBCSP and BreastScreen Australia data for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, data were classified according to the PHN 2015 structure (ABS 2011). BreastScreen Australia 2016-2017 and later data were classified according to the PHN 2017 structure (ABS 2016). PHNs were established in June 2015, and some of the geographic information presented includes data before that date. For further details on PHNs see the Department of Health’s website.

For the NBCSP and BreastScreen Australia data for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, correspondence files for SA3s and SA2s were sourced from Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2011: Volume 1 (ABS 2010a). For 2016-2017 onwards BreastScreen Australia data correspondence files for SA3s were sourced from Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2016: Volume 1 (ABS 2016a).

The correspondences produced by the ABS can be found on data.gov.au by searching for: ‘ASGS’, the ‘year’, and ‘correspondences’.

The number of people in different geographic areas (PHNs, SA3s or SA2s) may not sum to ‘Australia’ total due to rounding. The Australia total also includes some records that could not be attributed to a geographic area.

SA3s and SA2s with a numerator less than 20 or a denominator less than 100 were suppressed.

For a full list of AIHW products that include data and results by small areas (for example, by Primary Health Network areas) see AIHW data by geography.

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program age groups invited by year
Two-yearly screening was only fully rolled out from 2020. The specific ages invited within the 50-74 age for the periods covered in this report are shown in the following table:

<p>| National Bowel Cancer Screening Program ages invited by year |  |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>End date</th>
<th>Ages invited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7 August 2006</td>
<td>30 June 2008</td>
<td>55 and 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 July 2008</td>
<td>30 June 2011(^{(a)})</td>
<td>50, 55 and 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(^{(b)})</td>
<td>1 July 2011</td>
<td>30 June 2013</td>
<td>50, 55 and 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 July 2013</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>50, 55, 60 and 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 January 2015</td>
<td>31 December 2015</td>
<td>50, 55, 60, 65, 70 and 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 January 2016</td>
<td>31 December 2016</td>
<td>50, 55, 60, 64, 65, 70, 72 and 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 January 2017</td>
<td>31 December 2017</td>
<td>50, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64, 68, 70, 72 and 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 January 2018</td>
<td>31 December 2018</td>
<td>50, 54, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72 and 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 January 2019</td>
<td>31 December 2019</td>
<td>50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72 and 74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Eligible birth dates, and thus invitations, ended on 31 December 2010.

(b) Ongoing NBCSP funding commenced.

Note: The eligible population for all Phase 2 and 3 start dates incorporate all those turning the target ages from 1 January of that year onwards.

**Participation rates**

**National Bowel Cancer Screening Program**

Participation rates represent the percentage of people invited to screen through the NBCSP during the relevant 2-year period, who returned a completed screening test within that period or by 30 June of the following year. The number of individuals invited to screen excludes those who deferred or opted out without completing their screening test. As two-yearly screening was only fully rolled out from 2020, the specific ages invited within the 50-74 age group for the periods covered in this report are shown in the section ‘National Bowel Cancer Screening Program age groups invited by year’.

**BreastScreen Australia**

Participation rates represent the percentage of women in the population aged 50-74 screened by BreastScreen Australia over 2 calendar years. The population denominator was the average of ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP) for females aged 50-74 within the relevant geographical area (PHN, SA3) for the relevant 2-year reporting period.

BreastScreen Australia changed its target age group from 50-69 years to 50-74 years from July 2013; participation is reported for both the previous and current target age groups to allow comparison of trends with previously reported data.

**National Cervical Screening Program**

Participation in the NCSP for this report used a preliminary methodology to calculate participation until 5 years of data are available to calculate 5-year participation. This was defined as the percentage of women in the population aged 25-74 who had at least one Cervical Screening Test in 2018 and 2019. Participation rates were calculated using the ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP) for females aged 25-74 in 2018 and 2019, adjusted to exclude the estimated proportion of women who have had a hysterectomy and COMPASS participants.

COMPASS is a clinical trial comparing 2.5-yearly Pap test screening with 5-yearly HPV screening by the VCS Foundation in collaboration with Cancer Council NSW.

In this report, cervical screening participation is defined as the number of people who had a screening HPV test (primary screening or 12-month repeat HPV tests). This is a change from previous reports in which participation was defined as the number of people who had an HPV test for any reason. This means participation is lower than, and not comparable to, previous reports.

This definition restricts participation to screening tests, which aligns with the definition of participation for Australia’s 2 other population-based cancer screening programs.

**State or territory**

For data on the National Cervical Screening Program (from 2018 onwards), and the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, state or territory refers to the state or territory of residence.

For data on BreastScreen Australia, and the National Cervical Screening Program prior to 2018, state or territory reported refers to the state or territory in which screening occurred, not the state or territory of residence.

**References**


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## Technical notes

### Abbreviations & symbols

#### Symbols used in this report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n.p.</td>
<td>not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Abbreviations used in this report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASGS</td>
<td>Australian Statistical Geography Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Estimated Resident Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPV</td>
<td>Human Papilloma Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCSP</td>
<td>National Bowel Cancer Screening Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSP</td>
<td>National Cervical Screening Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSR</td>
<td>National Cancer Screening Register</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHN</td>
<td>Primary Health Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>Statistical Areas Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>Statistical Areas Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA3</td>
<td>Statistical Areas Level 3</td>
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</table>

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Notes

June 2021 data updates

Participation
Updated National Bowel Cancer Screening Program participation data for the 2018-2019 period from the NCSR as at 23 February 2021. Bowel screening participation rates for 2018-2019 are presented to 1 decimal place in this release (previously rounded to the nearest whole number in text).

Participation data by SA3 for all three screening programs from 2016 onwards has been updated to exclude some areas due to reliability concerns from low numbers in these regions and/or due to the correspondence being poor for these SA3s (as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Activity
Added National Bowel Cancer Screening Program activity data for the March quarter 2021.

Updated National Cervical Screening Program activity data from the March quarter 2018 onwards and added activity data for the March quarter 2021.

April 2021 data updates

Participation
No updates.

Activity
Updated to include activity data to December 2020 (September and December quarters 2020) for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and National Cervical Screening Program.

December 2020 data updates

Participation
Updated to include 2018-2019 data for BreastScreen Australia data, National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and National Cervical Screening Program

Activity
Updated to include activity data to June 2020 for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and National Cervical Screening Program.

Data quality statement

For more information about the data sources, see the Data Quality Statements on the following pages:

- BreastScreen Australia data 2019-2020
- National Bowel Cancer Screening Program screening data 2018-2020
- National Cervical Screening Program screening data 2019-2020

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Data

Data tables: Cancer screening quarterly data
Download Data tables: Cancer screening quarterly data. Format: XLSX 1.5Mb

Data tables: CSV file National Cancer Screening Programs participation
This zipped folder contains 3 files; a CSV machine readable data file containing participation data, a text Read Me file explaining the CSV file, and an accompanying metadata file in xlsx format.
Download Data tables: CSV file National Cancer Screening Programs participation. Format: ZIP 930Kb

CSV file: National Cancer Screening Programs activity
This zipped folder contains 3 files; a CSV machine readable data file containing activity data, a text Read Me file explaining the CSV file, and an accompanying metadata file in xlsx format.
Download CSV file: National Cancer Screening Programs activity. Format: ZIP 21Kb

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