



Cancer: breast screening (50 to 70 years)

NICE indicator

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www.nice.org.uk/indicators/ind65

Indicator

The proportion of women aged 50 to 70 years whose record shows a breast screening test has been performed within the last 3 years.

Indicator type

Network / system level indicator. The indicator would be appropriate to understand and report on the performance of networks or systems of providers.

This document does not represent formal NICE guidance. For a full list of NICE indicators, see our [menu of indicators](#).

To find out how to use indicators and how we develop them, see our [NICE indicator process guide](#)

Rationale

The aim of breast screening is to reduce mortality by finding breast cancer at an early stage often when any changes in the breast are too small to notice. Cancer Research UK report (England, women diagnosed between 2016 and 2020) that there is data that shows if breast cancer is diagnosed at stage 1, 90% of women will survive for 5 years or more, compared to more than 70% of women if diagnosed at stage 3 and more than 25% of women diagnosed at stage 4 ([Cancer Research UK \[2023\] Survival for breast cancer](#)). Cancer Research UK (2022) also report that 9,509 women died from breast cancer in 2017 to 2019 in England (11,499 in the UK). Age-specific mortality rates rise steadily from around age 30 to 34 (3.4 per 100,000) and more steeply from around age 65 to 69 (58 and over per 100,000 of the female population). The screening programme is therefore focused on women approaching this age and those already aged 60 to 70 years ([Cancer Research UK: Breast cancer mortality statistics](#)).

[Data from The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities \(OHID\)](#) shows that coverage was largely static between 2009 to 2010 to 2017 to 2018 (72%). There was a slight downward trend 2018 to 2019 and 2019 to 2020 (to 71%). Coverage was 61% in 2020 to 2021. Data for 2020 to 2021 shows geographical variation among primary care networks, ranging from 22% to 81%.

Source guidance

- Public Health England (2015, last updated 2021) [Breast cancer screening: programme overview](#)
- NHS England (2005, last updated July 2019) [NHS Breast screening programme screening standards valid for data collected from 1 April 2021: BSP-SO2: coverage](#)

Specification

Numerator: Of the denominator, the number of women registered to the practice who were screened adequately in the previous 36 months.

Denominator: The number of eligible women (aged 50 to 70 years old) on the last day of the review period.

Calculation: Numerator divided by the denominator, multiplied by 100.

Exclusion: Women who have had a bilateral mastectomy (adapted from [NHS England and OHID's Breast cancer screening programme standards valid for data collected from 1 April 2021 \[BSP-SO2: coverage\]](#)).

Personalised care adjustments or exception reporting should be considered to account for situations where the patient declines or does not attend.

Data source: National Health Application and Infrastructure Services (NHAIS). [OHID publishes Fingertips Cancer Services profile: Breast screening coverage: aged 50 to 70 years old indicator ID 91339](#).

Expected population size: Routine data published by OHID's Fingertips profile for the indicator (ID 91339) shows that 0.13% of persons: 1,339 per 10,000 patients served by a network (annual data for 2021 to 2022). There is no minimum number of patients required for network level indicators. However, consideration should be given to whether the majority of results would require suppression because of small numbers.

Update information

Minor changes since publication

September 2023: We updated this guidance document to align with current data sources and associated definitions.

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