

Executive summary

Ireland is projected to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040 (Fig 1). High participation in cervical screening is key to elimination. However, it is unclear what populations are more or less likely to participate as data are limited on demographic factors of participation. Ireland should strive for an equitable path to elimination of cervical cancer by improving monitoring cervical screening participation and collaborating with communities who are less likely to attend screening to develop targeted supports to increase participation.

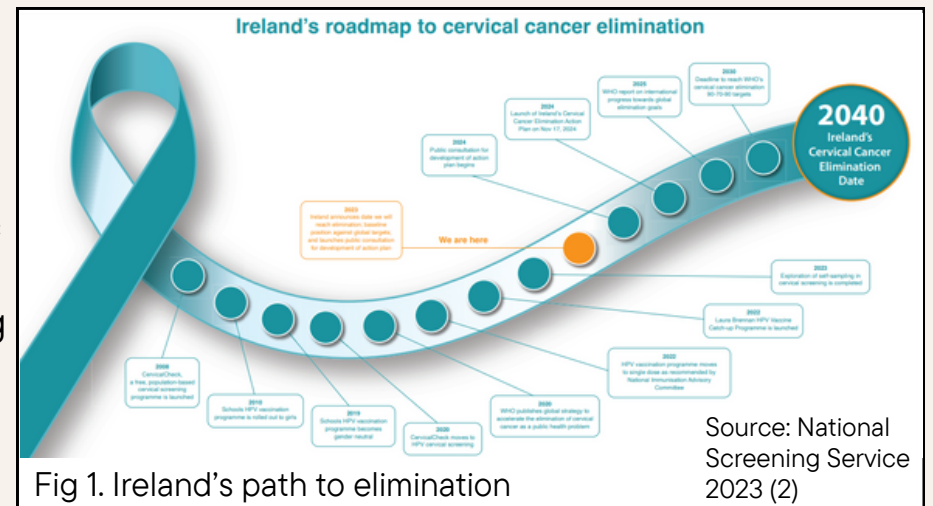


Fig 1. Ireland's path to elimination

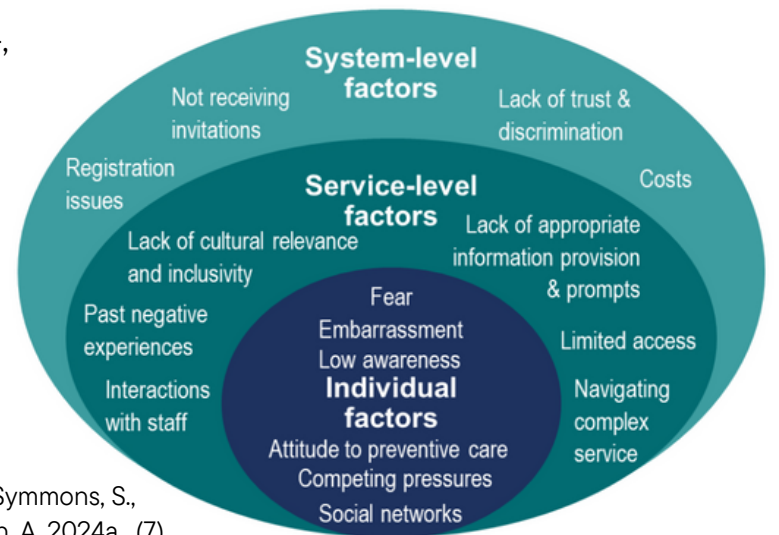
Problem

Cervical screening participation varies across population groups. In Ireland, it is unclear which populations are less likely to participate as monitoring demographics are limited, hindering Ireland's path to eliminating cervical cancer.

Evidence

- The World Health Organisation European Region has set out a roadmap to eliminate cervical cancer with the principle of "leaving no one behind" (1).
- Participation in screening is at 73% coverage (2020-2022), compared to its highest coverage of 80% (2012-2017) (3,4).
- The social determinants of health have an impact on screening participation. In Ireland, limited evidence shows those with lower participation include women of low socioeconomic position (by education and income level), place of residence (county), ethnicity, over 50 years old, and identifying as LGBT+ (4).
- Healthcare professionals and policymakers do not have a clear sense of who is and is not participating due to limited data in Ireland (6).
- The barriers to cervical screening attendance can be understood on a system-, service- and individual-level for all populations less likely to attend screening (Fig 2) (7). To support all populations less likely to attend in Ireland, understanding and addressing barriers is required.

Fig 2. System-, service- and individual-level barriers to cervical screening among populations less likely to attend in Europe.



Source: Mulcahy Symmons, S., Drury, A. & De Brun, A. 2024a. (7)

Conclusion

Ireland must strive to eliminate cervical cancer equitably. This requires monitoring participation with an equity lens and capturing a broad range of demographics in line with the social determinants of health to understand specific barriers and enablers of screening participation among all populations less likely to participate in screening.

Recommendations

- Improve monitoring of screening participation by linking demographic information to the screening register and use an equity framework such as PROGRESS-Plus (Fig 3) (8).
- Work with communities to understand needs and co-design supports to promote screening.

Fig 3. PROGRESS-Plus stratifiers
Adapted from Cochrane Online (8)

- Place of residence
- Race/ethnicity
- Occupation
- Gender/sex
- Religion
- Education
- Socio-economic status
- Social capital
- Disability
- Age
- Other vulnerable groups

References

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